





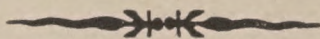
ONAR



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"The lady dreamed on, and her dreams were vivid, for the color in her face came softly, and went. She was not listless; she was reveling in the soul's fairy-land of phantasy."



BY

EDWIN FAXON OSBORN

Author of "Foundation Stones,"
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"The Vanishing of the Prince," Etc.



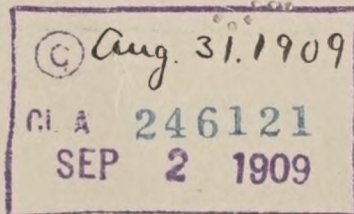
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DEDICATION

Let this be a respectful and loving tribute
to the woman who, in her happy youth, joined
her destinies with mine; and who has descended
with me, without reproach, into every dark valley
of my life; and, with sweet appreciâtion,
has climbed its sunny slopes with me.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF THE JACK PINES . . . 15

CHAPTER II

THE HEART OF THE STORM 39

CHAPTER III

THE FALL OF THE ANGEL'S KEY 64

CHAPTER IV

"OLE KENTUCK" 95

CHAPTER V

AWAKENING 115

CHAPTER VI

OUTWITTED 135

CHAPTER VII

VIVA AND TOM . . . , 164

CHAPTER VIII

WHILE THEY DREAMED 192

CHAPTER IX

A FRUITFUL SUMMER 213

CHAPTER X

GATHERING THE FRUIT 236

CHAPTER XI

ON THE WING 262

CHAPTER XII

FORECLOSED 277

CHAPTER XIII

THE CAVE 303

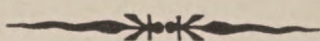
CHAPTER XIV

DEBT DAMNED 318

CHAPTER XV

REDEEMED 330

ONAR



CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF THE JACK PINES

Mark Burndale was enjoying his vacation in the jack-pine regions of northern Michigan when a strange thing happened.

One day, walking about in a listless, dreamy mood, he was wakened by the thought that those regions, so resembling extensive lawns, were haunted. The thought was uncanny, but not wholly unpleasant. His companions were off on some wild tramp or other nearly all the time, while he went his own way in solitary rambles. He had not been lonely; but when this thought of a haunting presence came to him, there came, simultaneously, the consciousness of solitude. He stood still to listen. Not an animate thing was to be seen or heard, neither the chirp of a

bird nor the sound of a far-distant cowbell—nothing, except only dwarf pines, generations of pine-needles, and the varying monotony of the sougning and sobbing of the wind through the pine-trees.

As the silence forced itself upon Burndale, a sensation that some person was near at hand grew very strong. "Who is here?" he tried to say; but his vocal organs refused to act. There was a spell upon him. He wanted to move, but did not. He could have moved. He was not afraid. The sensation was strange to him. He was spell-bound, or awe-stricken, or something of that kind; and was doomed to remain in that condition until the spell should be removed.

"Here he is, Harry! Bring water, quick!"

Water was brought, and Burndale's friends were not sparing in the use of it.

Slowly Burndale came to his senses.

"See here, old man, what does this mean?" asked Fred Jobson.

Burndale called home his wandering wits as best he could, and finally answered: "I think I saw a vision."

"Tell us about it, Burndale; it must have been a terrible vision to leave a man in the condition in which we found you," said Harry Franklyn.

"I can't tell," said Burndale, "whether I saw a vision, or a real physical object. I think that I saw a white horse and his rider; and the rider was the most beautiful woman ever dreamed of. I was feeling mighty strange when suddenly she came riding into the range of my vision, followed by a Great St. Bernard dog." After a moment's pause, he added; "I wish I knew whether they were real, or whether I saw a vision."

Franklyn answered promptly; "You saw a vision, beyond possible doubt, Mark. It could not have been a real flesh and blood woman, for you have seen too many of them, and survived, to be suddenly overcome, now, by a rustic beauty, riding a white horse."

During the early part of the night Burndale was very restless. He finally promised himself that, as soon as his companions had left on the following morning, he would examine the spot where he had fainted. Having thus reached a more settled state of mind, he fell asleep. For several hours he slept soundly, but finally he dreamed. Again he was under the spell of the haunting presence, and again the presence became visible. Horse, dog, and woman were before him; and the beautiful face and form of the woman fascinated him. But, in his dream,

he kept from fainting, and looked fully into the face so far surpassing, in its quiet beauty, any woman's face that he had ever seen before.

The lady sat her blooded, snow-white mare with the utmost ease, evidently being unmindful of the fact that she was riding. The beautiful creature that she rode seemed, like herself, to be wandering about, at will, not going anywhere in particular, but walking from one rise of ground to another, in a dreamy way, enjoying the fragrant air, and letting time go quietly by.

On a little hill, near by, the horse stopped and lifted high her comely head, her trim ears pointed forward, and her nostrils dilated until Burndale could see the fiery red within. She saw him, and was curious. The attitude of the horse did not arrest the lady's attention, however, and Burndale was permitted, for a short time, to see her, in her beauty. Her features were regular. Her forehead was perfectly smooth, and indicated a fine grade of intelligence and a mind at rest. The eyes were a deep blue, with a very remarkable power of variation and expression. Her hair was golden, in the sunlight; and very abundant, falling away in natural waves over the tips of delicate and shapely ears. The lines of the shoulders and neck were faultless, and the

head was perfect in its radiant comeliness.

Perhaps a sculptor might have done so much. But the transparent complexion, alive with the most delicate tints; and the warmth of the well-rounded face and form; and, above all, the clear light in her eyes, as she revelled in her dream—these were not of art, but were of abundant and rapturous life.

The lady dreamed on; and her dreams were vivid, for the color in her face came softly, and went— She was not listless; she was reveling in the soul's fairy-land of phantasy.

But the less preoccupied creatures that accompanied her evidently thought that Burndale's "dream of fair women" had continued too long; for the horse gave a decided whistle through her distended nostrils, and the dog accompanied the whistle with a deep growl. Then, with a little start, the lady awoke; and in a voice, rich, full, and perfectly modulated, said; "What is the trouble, my pets?"

Her quick eye followed the pointing nose of the dog; and fell, with magic destruction, upon Mark. The rich blood quickly tinged her face; but her wit was as quick as her blood, and her manners as good. "Your pardon, Sir!" the sweet voice said; and she was gone.

When fever runs high, the most dangerous time for the patient is when it breaks. Even in his sleep, Burndale showed dangerous symptoms.

"Water, quick, Jobson! I do believe this idiot is fainting in his sleep!" cried Franklyn.

The sound of the voice, the splash of water, and the frantic effort to swim, awoke him.

Well, you may be sure that, after the dream, Burndale was more than ever determined to find out, if possible, whether this vision was wholly and only a dream; or whether there was a substance, of which his waking vision and his dream were the shadow. Therefore, as soon as he had dressed, he declared his intention to look over the ground of his recent adventures.

"You better have breakfast first," said Jobson, "and then I will go with you. I am getting quite interested."

"No, Fred," said Burndale, "your heart is not strong enough for this investigation. If the lady should appear again, it would kill you outright. As to breakfast, I will help myself when I return. I am not hungry yet."

So saying he turned away, and left Jobson looking anxiously after him. He went at once to the spot where he had his strange experience the day before. The distance was not great and

he was soon on his knees, carefully examining the ground for the prints of hoofs. Before he was able fully to satisfy himself regarding the matter he was startled by a voice, saying; "Is yer all right, Marster?"

Burndale rose quickly, and saw an old negress, accompanied by the dog that he saw in his vision. The old woman's shining black face, surrounded by a circle of closely curling, white wool, wore an expression of amusement somewhat shadowed by anxiety.

Mark started quickly to his feet; and, facing the old woman a moment in silence, answered: "I am all right, Auntie. But arn't you rather late in your inquiries after my safety? Several hours have passed since I fell fainting here from a sudden attack of heart failure. I might have been dead, long ago, if I had been dependent for help upon the lady who was attended, yesterday, by that dog."

"Yes, Mas'r, I ain't doubt 'twuz heart failure ailded yer," said the old negress, with a knowing wink, and a laugh that showed all her white teeth intact. "Haw, haw, haw! I bin seen dem tuck dat ar way, befo'. Haw, haw, haw! Fer de lan' sake, Mas'r, deyer allers tuck dat ar way."

The hearty volubility of the old woman seemed

to relieve the dog, who had kept a stiff position by her side, for now he came up to Burndale, and touched his hand with his cold nose. Burndale hastened to make friends with him. By the time he had succeeded in this, he had succeeded also in regaining his composure, and now he was ready to try his wits again with the old woman.

"But, Auntie, whatever may have been the trouble, is your mistress so hard-hearted that she would not send help before the next day, or at least see whether help might be needed?"

"Hard-hearted, yer say! Dat ar is mighty quar talk 'bout my Missie Onar. No suh! My Missie Onar'd nebber let a fly suffer, 'cept she do sumpin fer 'im."

"But she seems to have left me all night."

"Missie Onar ain't know you bin hurt, twel de dog yer make 'er look back by pullin' at 'er bridle rein. When she seed how yer wuz, she broke and run to fin' me, an' she sen' me back yere right smart off to 'tend you; but when I got yere I seed yo frends 'tendin' you, an' I lay you all ain't need me. An' come dis mornin' nuthin' would do but I mus' tote my ole bones ober yere to fin' out how you feelin'. Now dat I fin' you des as game as eber I bleedz to git back."

She turned as she spoke, and Burndale stepped

after her, saying; "I will go with you and thank Miss Onar for her thoughtfulness."

"Dat nebber do, Honey, no how. You nebber been in'duced to Misse Onar. She's a mighty high lady. I 'low you's n't got no chance to see 'er, 'lessen yer get in'duced."

"But, Auntie, how can I get 'in'duced' out here in the wilderness, unless you will perform the ceremony," replied Mark, with a twinkle.

Then the old woman laughed again, saying; "I don't no you, Honey; an' my Missie Onar, she don' look fer me to in'duce my fren's to her! Haw, haw, haw!"

Burndale laughed with the old woman; and then said, with dignity; "You are quite right in that, Auntie; but you may show the way to Miss Onar, and I will introduce myself."

"Marster better not. Misse'll be mighty cool, and Mas'r might be tuck bad again," she added, with her knowing wink.

"I will take care of that," replied Burndale, "show the way."

The old Auntie looked at him sadly, but she was wholly subdued, and turned homeward with not another word.

When the dog saw Burndale following, it was a sore trial to the newly formed friendship. He

looked doubtfully at him, gave a low growl, and was decidedly inclined still farther to resent the intrusion. Burndale tried to pacify him; but he finally stopped, and Burndale thought best to stop also.

"Take care of your dog! Don't you see that he is inclined to be cross to me?"

"Yes, Marster, but dat dog's all the poteckshum my Missie hab up year; an' de Lo'd fo'bid dat I should call 'm off. No doubt you's all right, but I don'no dat an' he don'no it."

She did not say anything more, and walked away without looking back. The dog stood, stiff, for a moment, until he saw that Burndale did not insist upon following farther; then he slowly relaxed his position, licked his jaws, and turned, growling, and followed the old negress, looking back occasionally to see whether Burndale were daring to follow them. Burndale waited until the woman and dog were nearly hidden in the foliage, and then proceeded to follow them home, keeping at a safe distance. He did not feel fully justified in this conduct; but, conscious of his own integrity, he excused himself by thinking that such a beautiful young woman certainly needed better protection than could be afforded by an old negress and a dog.

The dog must have known that he was following, for he stopped several times and turned back fiercely, showing all of his beautiful teeth, and growling ominously. Burndale could hear him, even at the distance that he kept. Presently the dog bounded away with a joyous bark; and he could hear him making love to some one, with all the keen expressiveness of canine language and acting. Mark did not have any doubt as to the object of the dog's love, and sympathized with him fully. Stooping down, and peering under the low pines, he saw the beautiful angel of his vision and of his dream, standing with her graceful hand and arm extended, forbidding the wild caresses of the dog, who whirled around and around her in his mad delight. The dog soon became quiet, and stood, rigid, at her side, at "attention," his eyes burning into the shrubbery in Burndale's direction. Onar, standing with her hand still in the prohibitory pose, and leaning forward slightly, eagerly questioned the old negress. From the gesticulations of the old woman in his direction, Burndale very easily saw that they were speaking of him and of his desire to meet Onar. They spoke also of the faithfulness of the dog; for Onar patted his head, and spoke pleasantly to him. Casting a last glance

of inquiry toward the shrubbery where Burndale was supposed to be, she turned away, followed by her two companions.

Burndale did not feel free to follow her, as he had followed her servants, and determined to discover her abode by some more open means. He therefore returned to the tent to make his plan.

It was nearly mid-afternoon before he had decided upon his course of action. As soon as he had decided, however, he did not lose any time; but took his camera, and walked rapidly away to see what he could find.

He made a circuit in a different direction from that of the scene of the morning, intending to come upon the abode of Onar by some other path.

He strolled on and on, and became more and more absorbed in his own fancies. Presently he found himself at the western end of a beautiful sheet of water. He was surprised, for he did not know that any such sheet of water lay so near the tent. The water stretched away from the shadows that were lengthening from the west, and reaching out many yards upon the glassy surface,—away from the shadows into the slanting sunshine, and afar to the eastern shore, a mile or more distant, where now and then a sparkle showed that a hardly perceptible ripple

was breaking on the farther beach. The lake was nearly round, and exceedingly picturesque. Its wooded shores, here falling to a gently sloping beach, there rising to the pine-clad hills, cast their shadows into the deep bosom of the water.

As Burndale's eye followed the margin of the lake, it was arrested by a moving object, perhaps three-quarters of a mile distant, near the north shore. As he watched, he saw the flash of a paddle; and discovered that the object was a boat, steadily approaching the place where he stood. As the boat drew nearer and nearer, he learned, first, that the boat was of a peculiar shape; next, that it was built to resemble a great swan; then, that it was paddled by a woman; and, finally, with a keen thrill, that the woman was Onar.

Wondering just where she was intending to make a landing, Burndale's eye followed the direction that the boat was taking, and was suddenly arrested by a little cove at the foot of a pine-wooded knoll, only a few rods from where he stood. Looking on up the hill in the same direction, he saw, in plain sight, on the summit of the knoll, what he would have seen before, if he had not been so intently watching the girl,—a beautifully turreted castle, a miniature of the old world castles of heraldic fame.

"Ah, the castle of Onar!" exclaimed Burndale.

Still the light craft came on; it must land near him. Should he run away? Certainly not! He was now untroubled by any qualms of conscience, and he would wait and have it out. He resolved to keep his senses this time, and to make the most of them.

Onar now drew near. Presently she stopped paddling, the swan floated silently and gracefully into the cove, touched the white sand gently, and stopped. Onar did not leave her seat. She was in the land of the muses.

The boat was a luxurious affair. The seats were arranged with high backs, and with rests for the arms, so that one could sit as reposefully there as in an easy chair.

Onar sat still in the ample seat in the stern; and, with her right elbow resting on the arm of the seat, leaned her head upon her hand and back against the head-rest. From her wrist the loose sleeve fell back to the elbow, revealing a most exquisitely moulded forearm, as pure and delicate in tint as that of a little child, and quite as well-rounded and fair. The light summer dress fell loosely about her, continuing the suggestion of a form alive with inspiration for a sculptor. Her beautiful eyes caught and reflected the tint

of the evening sky, and the light of the sunset in the tree-tops glowed in them as a living fire. It was the fire of the muses, that burns quietly, slowly, and deeply. The face at once became pensive, almost sad. Nevertheless, Burndale saw that she was happy—deeply, quietly, but exceedingly happy. The sunset that glowed in the tops of the trees into which she was looking was touching her soul, as well as her eyes, with its rare glory. Burndale had loved Onar from his first vision of her. That first love had been inspired largely by her marvelous beauty of face and form. As he watched her now, he was moved by the pensive quiet of her soul; and his love enlarged a thousand-fold. It became dignified, virtuous, tinged with fear. Though Onar was a rapturously, voluptuously beautiful girl, she was also a divinely chaste and high-minded woman. Within that perfect body, lived—yes, lived and reigned—a vigorous and triumphant spirit.

After this deeper vision into the real nature of Onar, Burndale felt more at ease. He at once decided to make his presence known, and to speak to her; and he did not have any fear of offending her by so doing. He felt that she would search him through, at a glance, and that she would

know him, with all his faults, to be a true man.

He quickly arranged his camera, and pressed the bulb. Some slight movement of Burndale's aroused Onar, suddenly, to a listening posture. He could not resist the temptation to take a snapshot, the contrast between Onar's first attitude and this was so delightful.

Her eyes rested on him, instantly ; but, though evidently startled, she could not escape.

"Pardon, lady! I am Mark Burndale. Are you willing to help me settle the question that is haunting me, as to whether or not I saw a vision yesterday, by letting me assist you from your boat? I certainly did not hope to see a young woman here in the wilderness."

Onar did not hesitate the fraction of a second ; but that soul-searching look which Burndale had purified himself to receive had made him known to her while he was speaking. She came forward gracefully, in spite of the unsteady footing, and extended her hand for his assistance, saying ; "I must have been a frightful vision, Mr. Burndale. As to the wilderness, evidently neither of us can claim a monopoly of it any longer." Just the faintest possible sigh passed her lips as she gave him the tips of her fingers, and stepped upon the beach. So light and airy was her movement, and

so delicate her touch, that Burndale received but slight proof of her physical being.

"I cannot echo your sigh," he said.

"Gallantly spoken. I fear I am selfish," said she, smiling.

"I am selfish," said he.

She looked into his face, and laughed a soft, short laugh that was full of mirthful appreciation, and of sorrow.

The thought of a possibly awkward pause had not yet entered their minds when they were put beyond the danger of it by the tumultuous rush of the dog. With sharp barks and beseeching whines and frantic whirlings he came to meet his lovely mistress. Seeing Burndale, he at once became extremely dignified. With majestic spirit he demanded an explanation of Mark's presence. Burndale remained perfectly still; and again he saw that prohibitory lifting of Onar's delicate hand, which the great beast licked, yielding his will to hers.

"You have a faithful and efficient guardian," said Burndale. "I must be more inclined to do you harm than I think I am, or else that noble fellow is lacking in intuition."

"Huraldo's intuitions are not at fault. His great love and keen sense of responsibility often

overshadow them, until better acquaintance with the object of his suspicion assures him of the safety of his charge," Onar replied. Then she added; "Hu, this is Mr. Burndale. You are to trust him. Mr. Burndale, this is my friend and almost constant companion, Huraldo. Be good friends."

This was done with inimitable grace and quiet pleasantry; and the dog came forward promptly, putting up his great paw to shake. Burndale shook, and sincerely hoped that thenceforward he might be free from the danger of being shaken.

This impressive ceremony over, Onar said, as she led the way up the hill; "Will you walk up to my cottage? You are permitted to become acquainted with my dog in more conventional form than that in which you were introduced to me, unless—" and she stopped abruptly in the path—"we deny ourselves acquaintance, for the present, at least, because there chances to be no one here who has been introduced to us both, but who may not know either of us, to present us to each other in conventional form. Perhaps we had better wait," she added, looking up with an arch smile.

Burndale answered; "Pray do not deny me your acquaintance, Miss Onar— Pardon me, I do

not know another name." He waited with an interrogation in his eye and voice.

Onar hesitated a moment, and then answered, a little sadly; "I am only Onar, Mr. Burndale."

There was some covert meaning in her words and manner that Burndale did not understand. It troubled him, and filled him with a strange sympathy. He said something about it being a beautiful name, and that he was greatly favored in being permitted to call her by it, and they walked into the cottage in silence. Onar excused herself, and Burndale was left to make a survey of the house, in so far as he could from his seat.

The room in which he sat extended entirely across the middle of the house. On his right he could see, through draperies slightly parted, a table, laid with a snowy spread and china and silver. It looked very cosy and inviting after his tent fare.

Burndale, himself, will relate his experience while in Onar Castle, and the events that immediately followed.

From a room not far away I could hear the voice of the old negress, singing, as she rattled the cooking utensils. Onar had left the room through a door at my left and a little behind me. Through open portiers at my left and in front of

me, I could see a grand piano, surrounded with various smaller musical instruments and several music racks. So far as I could see, in my hasty examination, everything about the house showed money enough, and an unusually refined taste.

But from the moment that I entered the house I had felt the same strange, haunting presence that had held me fast among the pines, and had culminated in the vision of Onar. I could not tell then, and I have not been able to tell since, what gave me that feeling. Chairs, and all the ornaments on the walls, carpets, and rugs, and draperies, were such as one sees in any tastefully equipped house. Neither could I see anything unusual in their arrangement. But the general effect was certainly unusual; very charming, but a little uncanny. Possibly the isolation of the locality may have contributed somewhat to this sensation.

I was becoming awfully oppressed, when Onar appeared in the opening of the portiers. She was dressed wholly in white, without an ornament of any kind. She was ideally, radiantly beautiful. I found myself about to lapse into a senseless, stupid stare; but finally pulled myself together sufficiently to rise and meet her. She advanced a step or two, and said: "Please come in here,

Mr. Burnbale, and notice some of my curios."

I followed her into a room that was itself the most wonderful curio. From my seat in the living room I had caught a glimpse of the music corner. But now, as we approached it, the whole corner was seen to be full of the musical instruments of all countries. Some of them I had seen in my travels; but many of them I had never seen. Probably the finest instruments in the room were a harp of splendid workmanship; and a small, but perfectly made, pipe organ.

Her collection was not large, but it was rarely perfect in every piece; and the grouping of the instruments was in keeping with the weird effect of the whole house. When one went into that room he entered the enchanted land of dreams. I was mightily moved. All the hardness of life was refined away, and I realized the largeness of the soul.

After we had looked carefully around the room Onar, at my request, took her place at the piano and motioned me to a large chair, saying, with a radiant smile; "You are not to stir until I release you. If you do, you will break the charm and I cannot play. Neither must you speak. I am used to the applause of silence."

I sat quietly as her fingers touched the keys.

Her technique was wonderful beyond expression. She was inspired. I have no idea what she played. It was perhaps something of her own composing; unless, indeed, it were improvised. The music was too like herself, too wild, too free, too exalted, to be the mere rendition of another's thought. Her prelude was mazy, bewildering. It seemed as if something awful were about to happen. After a few moments, the music had taken me into a wild wilderness, where nothing relieved the monotony of the wind, moaning and wailing through the trees. But there was progress in the wilderness. We were going forward in the midst of the moaning. It was night. The solemn undertone was slowly changing. There began to mingle with the sound of the wind a sound like the roll of distant waters. We were certainly drawing near to some great wind-tossed billows. Ah! the ocean and the rushing of the tide among the rocks! The wind is slowly rising, and the waves come rolling in upon us. A storm is brewing. Now and then the roll of distant thunder comes in upon the rising wind—or was it the boom of breakers? Aha! It is both thunder and breakers; that crash was near at hand. And—that is neither thunder nor breaker. Listen again. That certainly is a gun at sea!

Yes, hear it! Again, amid the roar of sea and sky—again—again, hear it! Hold! Do not take me from the shore! But her will is strong. We are hovering over the wrathful, spiteful sea. The gun, at hand! Boom—wash-sh-sh! Voices! Horrified cries for help! Screams and prayers of doomed souls; they wring my heart. A grind, a crash upon a rock, then a moment of unearthly confusion. Why no more booming of the gun? Where are the voices that sounded in the chord? Silent. The war of the sea and of the sky is wild, fierce, furious. Onar, where are you? Take me back to the shore! Is the storm abating? Are we coming nearer to the shore? Yes—yes. Here is the shore. What is that, ah! rolling in the surf upon the beach! Oh, back from the cruel sea into the wilderness, back, back!

Onar now glided from the piano to her organ. There was only a rest in the music, when the organ took up the story, and told the sorrow of the heart when loved ones die. The stifled sobs of anguish wrung my heart. But finally there came relief in tears. The organ wept, and so did I. Then calmer moments followed; and I could feel that the mourner had found comfort in prayer, even peace and joy. Before the organ had ceased to speak, Onar's right hand touched

her harp. Surely, surely, thought I, an angel's face cannot be more spiritual than this face before me, so wrapped in its own devout emotion.

Onar had forgotten me. Her fingers began to wander aimlessly over the strings; now and then her voice blended somewhere in the chord, and then was lost. At last a single string vibrated. Like a grief-spent child, it sobbed and sobbed itself into silence. Onar's head bowed lightly upon the arm stretched out to grasp the harp; and all was still.

CHAPTER II

THE HEART OF THE STORM

I do not know how long we sat thus ; but the light was failing, and objects were beginning to become less distinct, a mellow, dreamy twilight had diffused itself throughout all the room, and had enwrapped the fair form of Onar in a mystic glory that made her seem to be more of the spirit land than of this, and the twilight had deepened into dusk, before she returned from her flight into the world of fancy to the consciousness of my presence.

I was really forgotten ; but I was not piqued ; for I was under the spell of Onar's presence. At last, just as it was becoming so dark that I could barely see the softened outlines of her form, she arose and came to me with quiet dignity, saying ; " Mr. Burndale, I have been discourteous to you. Please forgive me. Time, with me, is nothing ; and I forgot that you are mortal, and might tire

of sitting so long without anything to interest you; and then, pardon me, I wholly forgot you. If you will come again, I will not be so rude."

I thanked her, said I had never before so greatly enjoyed myself, and she walked with me to the veranda. Here I bade her good-night, and plunged off into the pines. I spent the night roaming those moaning forests. Not thinking at all of the direction I was taking, I simply walked away from the castle. I was awake and in the full possession of my faculties; but my mind was preoccupied. All things conspired to keep me wandering till morning. I sauntered away, regardless of direction, my soul revelling in the heaven of divine music.

While we had been sitting in the house, the wind had been rising; and now it was blowing half a gale. Presently my walk was arrested by the lake. I had come out upon the headland on the north side, near to the place where, a few hours before, I had first seen Onar. The full moon rose over the eastern end of the lake, and a silvery path came across the rising waves to my feet. The wind still continued to rise, and floating clouds scudded, now and then, across the moon, obscuring its light, and leaving only the light of the stars which shone from the part of

the heavens that was not yet overcast. Now, in reality, I heard the noise of waves washing upon the shore. The wind now blew a gale, and the clouds were fast overspreading the sky. My imagination, made vivid by Onar's music, saw the ocean before me, heard the thunder of breakers, made much of the light thunder that began to roll over the lake. Suddenly the moon shone through a final rift in the clouds, and by its light I plainly saw Onar, in her boat, in the midst of the tempestuous lake! The vision was distinct. She sat quietly in the stern, using her paddle with the ease of perfect skill. I even noticed that her hair was in a coil at the back of her head. Her arms, bare to the elbows, glistened in the moonlight, like alabaster. The vision was rare, spectral. The lake was exceedingly rough, the darkness was thick, and the storm rising fast. The girl was foolhardy! Yet, that momentary glimpse had shown her to be perfectly calm, and mistress of the storm-tossed lake. Her fairy craft arose and fell with all the confidence with which the stormy-petrel skims the waves of the angry ocean. I was alarmed for Onar's safety; and yet I felt a strange certainty that she was perfectly safe.

As I stood anxiously trying to catch another

glimpse of the little craft, I was favored by a flash of light from the muttering sky, and saw again that calm centre of the awful storm. The boat was drifting rapidly to windward. It was sure to go ashore before long, if it did not capsize. I determined to meet Onar, and pilot her home. With this thought in my mind, I stumbled along the shore; now running, then walking, picking myself up from a fall, or extricating myself from a bog, until I was nearly exhausted, and stopped to look and listen. As I listened, I thought I heard her, calling—no, singing—yes, singing a wild, tempestuous song that claimed the storm for an accompaniment.

I did not know how to proceed. I felt a little hesitancy about meeting Onar. She would think that I had been following her. I felt sure that she was not in need of my assistance; and so I finally concluded to seek my way to the tent. I knew that it would be necessary to return by the way of Onar's castle, and thought that my safest plan would be to keep within sound of the lake until I came to the boat-house where Onar had landed earlier in the day; then I would trust to my instinct to take me to the tent.

As I turned about, the barking of a dog, and the loud neighing of a horse startled me. But

it instantly occurred to me that these must be Onar's horse and dog, coming to take her home after her ride through the storm. Soon the calls were repeated, and now I heard a mellow "Hoo hoo!" from the shore not far away. Presently I heard the sound of hoofs, and two objects passed me in the darkness; one of them with a startled snort, and the other with a low growl. The sound of hoofs passed on, but the patter of the dog's feet ceased, and in a moment a cold nose touched my hand. Then followed a whine of inquiry. Huraldo evidently remembered that we were to be friends, and I addressed him confidently.

"Hello, Hu! This is rather dark. Can you see?"

He responded by taking my hand in his mouth and gently pulling me forward. Not knowing anything better to do, I allowed myself to be led along toward Onar. The darkness was so dense that I could not see even a shadow in the place where the dog must be; but he went forward with perfect confidence, and soon I heard Onar asking; "Where is Hu, Zephyr; did not he come with you?"

This suggestion of possible unfaithfulness was more than Huraldo could stand. He left me with a bound, and was soon beside his mistress.

Now what should I do? If the dog would let me alone, I could follow, at a distance; but that was not probable. Suddenly it occurred to me that Onar intended to leave her boat here until morning. If I could get into it without attracting attention—The storm and the noise of the lake favored this plan; and I was soon afloat.

I had not been long on the water before the rain began to cease; finally, about two o'clock it stopped entirely. Soon the stars were shining out through rifts in the fast dispersing clouds. The moon had set, but there was light enough to enable me to discover the direction that I should take; and in due time I landed near the castle.

As I was passing on my way to the tent, old Dinah rushed out, in great distress, crying:

"O Mas'r Burndale! whar's Missie Onar?"

"Why, Auntie, has not Miss Onar come?"

"No, Marster. She went out on de lake las' night, arter yer lef', an' now I low she done bin drowned, sho nuf. She said she'd drif down to de odder end ob de lake, an fo' me to let out Hu an' Zephyr, 'bout midnight, to go fetch 'er back. But dey isn't come back—no hoss, no dog, no Misse. She sholy drowned dis time! She mos' sholy is!" and Dinah hid her face in her apron swaying back and forth, and moaning piteously.

"No, Auntie, she is not drowned. I got lost and I met the horse and dog, and I heard Miss Onar talking to them, after she had landed. She should have been here, long ago. Does she often go out on the lake in such a storm?"

Down came Dinah's apron.

"Law sakes, Mas'r Burndale, sho as dere come up a big storm, night or day, she sartin to be in it. She jus' lak a sea bird. De wind al'as blow dat a-way in de big storms, an' she bin teach de hoss an' dog whar to go arter her. You low she 'live, sho nuf?"

"Certainly she is, Auntie. If she could get safely to shore in that storm, she is certainly safe with her faithful animals, on the land. I think she will be here presently. Have you a fire? I am very wet."

"Law sakes, so yer is, Honey! Come right in de kitchen."

As soon as we were seated by the fire I asked; "How long have you been with Miss Onar?"

"Me? O lan', I'se al'as been with 'er. I's bo'n way down in ole Kentuck' an' de berry day I's bo'n my daddy was killed by a hoss, an' my mammy died soon arter f'om de shock. Dere was nobody to tak me, an' so Missie tuk me, an' I growed up with de cullo'd people on her place

in ole Kentuck. Den she pick me out to trabble wid 'er, and so here I be."

"How old are you, Auntie?"

"Eighty-one, nex' birfday. But, law, Marster should not ask a lady's age!"

"Are you a lady, Auntie?"

"Go 'long! You askin' Missie Onar's age."

Old Dinah seemed quite grieved with herself for having answered so promptly.

"Don't you worry, Auntie. Onar is younger than any of us, however old she may be."

This word of appreciation of her beloved Onar won Dinah back, instantly.

"Dat so, Marster," she answered, leaning over toward me, and pointing a long, skinny finger at me. She looked quite like an old black witch.

"So'thin' mighty quar 'bout Missie Onar. She talks to me about my bein' bo'n lak she's done growed up at dat time. But she de bestest puson eber I see—de berry bestest."

"Do you know anything about her parents, or where she was born?" I asked this as carelessly as I could, but Dinah was on her guard now. She answered, looking dreamily into the fire:

"All dead, long ago."

The conversation was interrupted by a signal whistle, to which Dinah responded by going to

the door, saying, "Dere she be now, sho nuf." Then she added, as I was about to go out also;

"You stay right dere by de fire, Marster; you not fit ter be seen, and I lay she no great of a sight arter de rain."

I had barely time to say; "Do not tell Miss Onar that I am here," before Dinah was through the door.

It was some time before she returned. When she finally came in, she gave me a signal to be silent, coming close to me, and whispering:

"Misse awful skeered. De dog nose around and around, and done refuse to show her de way home, huntin' fo' so'thin' twel daylight. Den Misse saw de boat off on de lake wid a man in it and now she find her boat here. Den she said to me dat dere's men snoopin' around. Now yer better clar out right smart or yer done get cotch in yer wet close, and yer don't look up fer much in dem."

Dinah laughed, silently. I told her to keep still about me, and I would make it all right with Onar. I then went out, and was met by Hu who took hold of me as he had done in the storm, and led me off in the direction of the beach where Onar had landed in the night. My curiosity was greatly excited. Somebody or something else

had been abroad in the storm last night. The dog knew me then, and he knew me now; yet he was not satisfied.

"Go on ahead, Huraldo," said I, releasing my hand, "and I will follow."

He did, and I followed rapidly. The path was good, and now that we had daylight the distance was not great, so that we soon reached the spot to which Huraldo was anxiously leading the way.

When we had reached the place the dog went rapidly about, sniffing; and finally he seemed to strike a trail that led him away from the lake. I followed. Not being very proficient in keeping the scent, Huraldo did not go very fast; and two or three times he wandered back to the shore of the lake. The creature that we were following had evidently been wandering in the darkness. After some time I discovered a well defined boot track. Evidently we were following a man. I at once proceeded to satisfy myself, by measuring the track, that we were not following my own trail, made in my last night's wanderings before I took the boat. I felt very sure that we were not; but I could not say certainly where I had not been during the night. However, the measurement proved that the track had not been made by my boot; but that some other man, as well as I,

had been wandering in the darkness last night. His trail often crossed itself, and finally led off in a bee line. I judged from this that daylight had come to the rescue; but that the man, not being able to determine his whereabouts, had taken to following his compass until he should reach some landmark by which he could locate himself. My conjecture proved to be correct; for, after following in this direct line for about an hour, we struck the well defined trail leading from the lake, where my companions fished, to our tent. Here the man had left off following his compass and had followed the trail in the direction of the tent. Huraldo and I soon reached the end of the trail, and were met by my two friends.

Hu gave a short bark and a growl, and going quickly up to Franklyn, took a rough hold upon his hunting jacket, and fairly dragged the poor fellow to my side. This done, he let go, and looked up into my face, wagging his tail, and saying plainly enough:

"This is the vagabond. Take him!"

I laid a heavy hand upon Franklyn's shoulder saying, "I have him, Hu. Now you had better hurry home, or your mistress will wonder what has become of you."

Would he understand? What a question! He

gave a satisfied bark; and, looking back as he went, bounded away in the direction of the castle.

"Well!" exclaimed Franklyn, "I seem to be taken prisoner on my own premises, run down by a lunatic and a dog. Pray what does this mean? We have been seriously worried about you, old man! What have you been up to?"

"I have missed two of your good meals, Fred, and I am wet. Harry, you, too, have a story to tell. Tell it, while I change my clothes, and eat; and then I will give an account of myself."

We all went into the tent, Jobson proceeded to get a lunch for me, and Franklyn said:

"My story is soon told. When you did not come in last night, we were both alarmed about you, since you have not been behaving very well lately; and we both started out to look for you. I had no doubt that we should find you keeled up somewhere; but Fred laughed at my fears, and when the darkness and the storm came down he yearned more for his warm bed than he did for his lost friend. The longer I searched, the more anxious I became; until the darkness grew black with rain, and I lost my way, and wandered until daylight enabled me to follow my compass. At last I struck the trail, and reached the tent."

Harry here came to a full stop in his narrative.

"Please give us a little more detail," said I. "Did not you meet with any special adventure?"

"The only incident of particular interest in my experience is, that I probably fell asleep while walking about, and dreamed. The last that I remember is that I was wet, and that the sound of falling rain was like the sound of many waters. Then I dreamed of a large body of water near at hand. I thought I heard the sound of waves breaking upon a beach. Then, wandering too near, and not being able to see at all, I dreamed that I found myself ankle deep in the water, and that the waves were breaking up to my knees. At that moment, as if to increase my alarm, the whole country was illumined for a second by a flash of lightning. I saw a stormy lake, on the angry bosom of which a hugh swan rose and fell; and on the back of the swan reclined a mermaid of wonderful beauty. I think it is evident that I must have been very wet. I drew myself back out of the phantom sea; and then, by the law of association, I suppose, having been thinking of you, Mark, and of your aberrations, I dreamed that I heard the neighing of a horse and the loud barking of a dog. I thought that the dog followed me about for a long time. Finally I heard the sweet voice of a woman, calling, 'Hu, Huraldo

come here!’ For a long time the dog refused to stop following me; but finally he obeyed the calling voice, and left me. I do not know when I awoke; but when I came to myself I was still walking, and signs of dawn were in the east.”

Franklyn dropped his chin into his palm.

“Harry, how do mermaids wear their hair?”

“H’m? The pictures all have them with hair flying.”

“But this one,” said I, “had her’s in a coil at the back of her head?”

“Why, old fellow!” said Franklyn, springing up, “did you see that too?”

“I see your dream? Are you sure that it was a dream, Harry?”

“That’s what troubles me, Mark: it seemed too real to be a dream; and I don’t know when I went to sleep, nor when I awoke. But then—pooh, bah!—it must have been a dream. There is not even a lake near here, to say nothing of a monster swan with a mermaid on her back.”

Franklyn looked at me in a dazed kind of way for a moment, and then went back to his musing. Jobson and I sat quietly watching him, when he looked up suddenly, asking; “Mark, by what name did you call the dog that came with you?”

“Hu; Huraldo, in full; the same as that by

which you say your dream-lady called her dog. Did you ever hear that name for a dog before?"

"No," he answered, looking blank.

"Well!" exclaimed Jobson, "I think we must hear your story, right now, Mark."

Burndale then proceeded to relate what the reader already knows about his late experience. He proved that the lake was not a dream, that he had seen the mermaid, and that he had driven the swan across the lake. He told them that the horse and dog were out after Onar, that he had heard of the dog's actions in the night, and had been led over the wanderer's track that morning by Huraldo. He finished his story by saying; "It was not a dream, old fellow; you did not sleep neither did I."

Franklyn's head went down again upon his hand. Burndale caught up a dipper full of water from the table, and emptied it upon the bowed head. Franklyn came to. Burndale passed out of the tent with some sprightliness. Franklyn followed. A general rough and tumble ensued.

Just as the trio were finishing their breakfast on the following morning, a messenger came in bringing Jobson a peremptory summons home. He took the messenger's horse, and hurried back leaving Burndale and Franklyn to break camp

and to follow, the same afternoon.

Burndale and Franklyn, as soon as they had the tent and utensils in readiness for the team that Jobson was to send back from the station, started out to call upon Onar, hoping to relieve her of any uneasiness that she might feel because of the interruptions which she had experienced in her stormy-petrel act.

They reached the castle late in the afternoon only to find that Onar had gone. They examined the house carefully, and found it securely closed. The windows and doors, both above and below were guarded with shutters of boiler iron. These shutters were so skilfully decorated as to have led Burndale to suppose that they were ordinary wooden blinds. All of the outbuildings, and the boat-house, were guarded in like manner.

While Franklyn was examining the boat-house Burndale returned to the house, and there found that the outside cellar door had been left unfastened. It was a heavy iron door, with hasp and staple on the outside, and with two large bolts inside. These inside bolts had not been shot. Burndale went in and found easy access to the whole house, except one room in the chamber the door of which was locked. Nothing had been taken from the house, and everything was in the

most perfect order ; even the table in the dining room was spread just as Burndale had seen it two days before.

As Burndale went out he noticed that the cellar was ceiled completely, both bottom and sides, with this same boiler iron. He did not mention his discovery to Franklyn ; but when they had returned to the baggage, and Franklyn had lain down among the stuff, and gone to sleep, he took the opportunity to slip away. Taking a large complicated padlock which he had, and running back to the castle, he locked the cellar door on the outside.

As he turned to go up out of the cellar way, a shadow fell upon him, and in a moment Huraldo stood before him. All things taken into account Hu concluded that they had all been deceived in Burndale ; and therefore the faithful fellow would not be won nor bribed ; but first ordered the poor man to stay where he was, and then called for his mistress. In a moment Onar reined up at the cellar way.

"Why, Mr. Burndale ! cannot you get in?"

There was a look of annoyance on her face. Huraldo was right : appearances were very much against Mr. Burndale. But Onar evidently did not wish to think evil of him. He returned her

look with some embarrassment, and smiling a little, answered; "I can get in, but I cannot get out, as you must observe."

Onar at once looked beyond Burndale to the lock that he had put on the door. Her face lit up beautifully, and she exclaimed pleasantly;

"Ah! You discovered that I had neglected to fasten this door, and you have put a lock on it."

"Thank you," said Burndale.

Huraldo immediately made way for him, and begged his pardon with great humility.

Burndale came out of the cellar way, closed the doors, and going up to Onar held out the key. She did not offer to take it, but said; "If I take the key, Mr. Burndale, how will you get your lock?"

"Please take the key," said he, "when I need the lock I will seek the key."

She took it, saying; "A deserted house is the property of whosoever can gain entrance, is it not? and as you discovered the only place where entrance can be gained, and as you have guarded that place so well as to prevent the entrance of any other—explorer, does not the place belong to you, provided that you go in and come out by way of the cellar?" Huraldo growled gently.

Burndale's conscience embarrassed him, as he

recalled how he had followed Onar's servants; and as he realized, suddenly, that he had just this day explored her castle. Onar saw his embarrassment; but waited, unrelenting, for him to defend himself, if he could. But Burndale was a lawyer; and, moreover, he was conscious that his motives had not been entirely wrong; so this calm demand for a full explanation piqued him a little, and gave him more stamina than he had ever before felt in Onar's presence. She saw it with pleasure. Huraldo wagged his tail a trifle.

So Burndale answered her with some dignity: "Miss Onar—I do not know the surname—"

Onar colored slightly, and bowed genially. She enjoyed his pique, and the return shot about the name did not even wound her.

Burndale continued: "Twice have I been guilty of taking undue liberty with your property: once I followed Dinah and Huraldo to learn where you lived. I did not so gain the knowledge, however; for, as soon as they met you, I turned back. I came to the place where you landed from your boat without any knowledge that either you or your castle were in this neighborhood, although I hoped to find both. The other time was just now. I have just now explored every room in your house, except one; that one was locked."

Onar did not frown at this ; but a shadow arose to the surface of her face and remained there. She waited for him to proceed.

"For the first offense I have no excuse to offer. But I think that, under all the circumstances of your lonely presence here and the sudden closing of the house, I was justified, finding this door unfastened, in looking to see whether or not any still stranger thing had taken place within. I knocked at the door of each room before entering and each time that I knocked I half expected to hear an answer, and each time I opened a door I half expected to see signs of a deed that ought not to have been done."

As Burndale spoke the shadow gradually lifted from Onar's face ; and when he had finished she held out the key, saying ; "Keep the key, Mr. Burndale, in token of my perfect confidence."

But before Burndale had even offered to take it she drew back her hand to her lap, the shadow returned to her face, and she said ; "Mr. Burndale, I received you with all confidence. I have not doubted you, but have only given you the opportunity to explain fully what appeared to be to your great disadvantage. Your explanations are candid ; and, surely, a woman ought not to condemn you for having a little curiosity. Will

you explain how my boat got from the farther beach to the boat-house so early yesterday; or do you know nothing about that?"

"I brought it up."

The fire kindled in Onar's eye; but she only waited in silence for him to make his defence.

Burndale proceeded: "As my conscience is wholly at rest in this matter, I did not think it necessary to mention it in my confessions," with a smile, to which Onar did not respond.

Burndale was provoked just enough to make it possible to explain.

"Your music made a very deep impression upon me at the time; and, instead of going to my tent, I strolled about, musing, without any thought of direction. The storm and the darkness came on, and I was lost. After some time I heard a horse neigh, and a dog bark. Then I heard your answer. The horse trotted past me with a snort, and went on. Huraldo growled, but stopped and came up to me. He took my hand in his mouth—"

Hu had been listening; and now he sat before Burndale, looking up into his face, and wagging his tail in confirmation of the story.

"—and led me on after the horse; until he heard you inquire for him. Then he left me, and ran

on. I knew that, with your trusty animals, you were perfectly safe; and I felt that, if I made my presence known, you would naturally think that I had followed you. I knew, also, that you would not want your boat before morning, and that you would want it then at the boat-house. And, for myself, I thought to escape the embarrassment of a mid-night meeting with you by taking to the water."

"You were very kind, Mr. Burndale, and very considerate. I was alarmed last night, but not by you. I knew then, by the way in which Hu acted, that you were not the cause of his unrest."

Here Hu came close to Burndale; and, looking up very earnestly into his face, he whined and looked from him to Onar, back and forth; then whined again and sat down.

"Huraldo seems to think that you can explain this matter also."

"Yes. I was in the kitchen, by the courtesy of Dinah, when you came home in the morning. She left me by the fire and went out in response to your call. After she came in I went out to go to my tent, when Hu took my hand and led me away to the place of your landing last night. Together we traced the wanderings of some one. At last we came out at our tent, and Huraldo

laid hold of one of my companions and forced him up to me. I have not been very well, of late, and my friends found me unconscious once. They were out searching for me, and this friend got lost in the storm, and was out all night. Huraldo followed him for a long time; but, my friend said was finally called off by a woman's voice."

When Burndale finished speaking Onar was smiling beautifully. With a significant glance at Huraldo, she called Burndale's attention to him. Poor Hu was lying with his nose between his paws, rolling his eyes from one person to the other in a manner expressive of intense shame. Burndale laughed, Hu looked so very droll and sheepish. But Onar said; "Come here, Hu."

He arose slowly, and with drooping tail went to the horse, and stood up with his paws on the saddle.

"You need not feel badly. You did not know Mr. Burndale's friend. You only did your duty. Good Hu."

He licked her hand, took two or three frisky turns around the horse with short sharp barks and stopped before Burndale with a look of quiet appeal on his face.

"O, its all right, Hu; always take good care of your mistress and her property, if you have

to eat me and all of my friends, at a venture."

Hu caught the touch of irony in Burndale's voice, and was doubtful as to its significance; so he waited a moment, and said "wooh?"

Burndale laughed and said "Good Hu."

"O joy! Forgiven again!" acted Hu, and sat down to await farther developments.

"Miss Onar, may I ask if you are leaving now because of our having disturbed your 'ancient solitary reign'?"

"The quotation involves more than I am going to admit," she replied, laughing; "but, indeed we should be leaving soon, anyway. I love this solitary place dearly, however, and I am very glad to have all doubtful matters so satisfactorily explained before I leave. I thank you for your frankness. Here is your key; and I hope that you will feel that you are perfectly welcome to use it." And smiling brightly back upon him she galloped away.

Huraldo came up, whining, and held out his paw. Burndale took it, and putting the key into the dog's mouth, motioned to him to take it to his mistress. Hu was soon out of sight; and Burndale, turning sadly away, went back to the camp. Soon the team came, and they departed.

It is now three months since they returned.

Everything remains as it was left that day, only that the leaves have fallen, and the lake is murmuring a requiem over them. Since the return Burndale has had a long, tedious fever. Ages seem to him to have passed; he is not the same man that he was before. He was formerly very fond of society; and a general favorite with all the ladies, both old and young. But his fever, or his vacation, or both, have left him to a life of solitude. His friends rally him; ask him what he saw in the forest of jack pine that so wrought upon him; ask him whether or not he has become engaged to a squaw, or vowed perpetual celibacy or what? But to no purpose. Mark is changed.

The fever seized him soon after his return. He was very ill. In his delirium he talked about Onar alone. He spoke softly and delicately of her refined and spiritual beauty; he raved about her danger on the lake; and he was distressed for the victims of a terrible shipwreck. Finally he recovered, but his physician was not wholly satisfied with his convalescence. He persisted too long, in the opinion of the physician, in the wild fancies of his delirium, holding to some of them even after he was out and attending to his business as usual.

CHAPTER III

THE FALL OF THE ANGEL'S KEY

It was about this time that Gerald Holmes, a chum of Burndale in his college days, called on him, and was persuaded into remaining for a few days. To this tried friend Burndale opened his heart, and told him about Onar. At first Holmes joked him, after the manner of young men; but when he saw how serious a matter this was with his old friend he stopped bantering, and invited his confidence.

While telling his story Burndale often fell into fits of revery from which Holmes was obliged to recall him. This tendency gave Holmes a very decided interest in his friend's mental condition, an interest which soon developed into anxiety on his behalf. At last, when Burndale told of his wandering away from the castle, under the spell of Onar's music, and of day-dreaming all night, Holmes said, a trifle sharply; "Hmp! I consider

that to be a species of insanity which does not however, relieve one from responsibility for his own condition. Is this whole story of Onar only a day-dream?"

"Holmes, I am confiding to you as I have not to any one else the strangest experience of my life, or of anybody's life. You must be patient. Was I ever given to day-dreaming?"

"No. You were always matter-of-fact, to a fault: so I am the more surprised."

"Well, I want you to be patient with me, and to help me out of my maze. If this whole affair is a day-dream or a phantasm, it is nevertheless something very real to me; and I cannot trust myself any farther without the aid of some friend to help me solve the mystery."

"I understand you better now, Mark, old boy; and you may depend upon me for sympathy and any help that I can render. Now tell me frankly whether or not you believe this Onar to be a real flesh and blood mortal."

"I think she is."

"How do you know that she is not just a fancy of yours? Has any one else seen her?"

"Why—the old negress saw her; and there were the horse and dog."

"Did you ever touch the old negress, Mark?"

"N-o-o: but the sense of touch is not the only sense that a man has. I saw her, she spoke."

"Did you find the track of the white horse?"

"No."

"Did you touch the dog?"

"Always you say 'touch.' Have you lost the other senses, Gerald? But I 'touched' the dog. I shook his great paw: it was heavy and strong. Moreover, I handled the boat; and Onar's hands certainly made the paddle drive the boat through the water, whether I could 'touch' them or not."

"Who is 'touchy' now, Mark? Come! on with your novel."

"Pshaw! Gerald, it's all nonsense to doubt the physical existence of Onar. I will win her yet and marry her."

"So? so! Marry the goddess of dreams? ha ha! and raise a brood of young dreams? he, haw! A fair, fairy wife, to be sure; and a fair family of fairies, I vow! Come, old man, let me laugh you out of this whimsy. An hallucination can make a dog's paw as heavy as the reality. Well go on, Mark; I must take you seriously, I see."

"If you had heard the music in which Onar breathed out her soul, and if the sensations that followed, sensations of boundless spiritual life, had been yours, I believe that you would have

wandered in the wilderness all night, as I did."

When Burndale had finally finished telling his story, Holmes said; "Well, Mark, I am deeply interested, whatever I may think. I understand that you have been very ill since your vacation."

"Yes. Why?"

"Who attended you?"

"Doctor Smith. I do not see what that has to do with the case."

"It may have much to do with it. I think you had a fever."

"Yes."

"These fevers are frequently in one's system producing strange hallucinations, for many days sometimes for three or four weeks, before one is really down. I am going to consult your doctor."

"Well," laughed Burndale, evidently uneasy, "go ahead. I see that you are wedded to your illusions. You will find a sympathizer in Smith I think, although he does not say much to me. I confess that it all seems like a dream to me, at times; but I think that we would find Onar castle to be a reality, were we to visit that region; and the lake, too, would be there; and I hope, also to find, sometime, that the fair woman herself is real. Go on and consult the physician. You may have to build a special asylum for me yet."

Holmes called upon Doctor Smith, and found him very much interested in the case.

"Doctor, do you find many cases of simple hallucination, without any foundation of fact, in such fevers?"

"We usually see a decided connection between the particular symptoms and some antecedent circumstance. For example, in this case, Burndale was alone most of the time, in a lonely and very romantic region: all this had a tendency to cause him to recall the many beautiful and noble women whom he had known, and by blending these the fevered brain produced that marvelous composite of the wilderness."

"The greatest difficulty with your theory, as I see it, doctor, is the fact that though Burndale has been a great 'ladies' man,' he has not been easily 'smitten' nor accustomed to dwell in solitude upon their charms. The theory requires, it seems to me, some more immediate excitant. It would seem, too, would it not? that these fancies should have passed away by now."

"Well, Mr. Holmes, I am troubled about that. I should be very glad to find proof that Burndale had really seen a beautiful woman up there, with a white horse a dog and an old negress her only companions in a vast wilderness. But a woman

would die from fear in such a situation; and so I am watching our friend very closely, and I am expecting complete restoration before long."

"One more question, doctor: Did any one else see this woman?"

"I have heard that Franklyn did. Now that I think of it I remember that he seemed to be loth to talk about the matter. I laughed about that 'dream of fair women' that Burndale had, and asked him if he also had not been able to conjure up such a dream in that land of visions. He gave an evasive answer. I did not think of it at the time. I must see him again."

"Why, of course he saw her!" said Holmes rising, as he recalled more of Burndale's story: "or else he dreamed, as he at first thought that he did. But it is strange that his dream should correspond so exactly with what Burndale is so sure that he saw."

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Holmes."

"Excuse me, doctor. I will go and get Franklyn, and we will worm the truth out of him."

So saying he left the astonished doctor much excited, and soon returned with Franklyn. The result of the conference was that the doctor gave Harry a sugar pill; and, laughing, told him to call again in a day or two if he did not speedily

regain his badly scattered and wandering senses.

"Well, doctor, that mermaid on the back of a swan was very like the fair figure that Burndale saw in her boat, was it not? Could they both have been so crazed in the same way?"

"Hardly probable," muttered the doctor.

"Well, be careful with your drugs, Mr. Smith. It would be awful to doctor such a glorious ideal out of a man's head, upon the theory of mental aberration. Most men would need to be doctored for the same trouble, soon or late. Ha, ha, ha! Would it be apt to make his memory unreliable thereafter?"

Doctor Smith joined in the laugh and agreed to be careful with his medicine.

Holmes left the physician's office in a state of great amusement; but his face soon became very grave; and he walked away slowly, thinking.

After Holmes left Burndale to make the visit to the physician, he sat down and gave himself up to a careful study of his problem, to discover if possible whether or not there was positive proof which he could produce to convince Holmes of the physical reality of Onar. Suddenly he sprang up and ran to his bedroom, laughing loudly.

He opened a drawer with all confidence, still laughing. Then he drew back, suddenly silent

and pale. He had thought of his photographs of Onar, and had laughed to think how complete would be the proof. They were not there, where he invariably kept them. He sat still, and drops of sweat beaded his brow. At last he arose, as a man in a dream might arise, and said; "If I can't find them, then it was all a fancy, and I am insane. I will not tell Gerald."

He then searched everywhere, but they were not in the room.

Holmes found him still searching, and in a state of mind bordering upon frenzy.

"Mark—Why, old boy! what's the matter?"

"Nothing."

Holmes sat down near his friend and placed a hand on his knee, saying; "Mark, you won't let that laugh of mine destroy your confidence in my sincere sympathy—tell me you won't."

"I don't think I have any reason to doubt your sympathy, Gerald."

"Then tell me what has troubled you during my absence."

"I think that I either am or have been insane Gerald, and I am very thankful you are here."

"Insane is not the term by which to designate the aberrations of a fever, Mark. But what has changed your mind since I left you? Tell me. I

will help you work it out, if you will trust me."

"I had decided not to tell you about it at all."

"Change your mind. I will help you."

"I know it will be better to do so—Well then, I thought that I had two photographs of Onar; but I can't find them! Yet—I know that I took them and finished them myself. Which is the dream, and where am I? I came after the photographs, thinking that they would settle the matter. 'Do I wake, or am I dreaming?'"

"I sometimes wonder, Mark, whether or not all life may be only a dream from which we shall sometime awaken. But we are generally able to find out which part of life, even if it be a dream, is the real within the dream, and which part is the dream within the dream. Get on your coat. We have just time to catch the north-bound train for Brookings. We will settle this matter in cold blood, literally; for now there is snow on the castle of Onar. Come, why don't you hurry?"

"I have a strange dread of that country. But I suppose it is very foolish. I will go."

In due time they arrived at the siding called Brookings, and after considerable trouble finally succeeded in getting the use of a horse and very clumsy old sleigh. Just at dusk they set out, well bundled and provisioned, to be sure; but, as

Burndale urged, very foolish to start at night.

"Pshaw! Mark, come along. I want to see this fairy-land by moonlight. Moreover, you couldn't find any place to lodge, if you were to try."

In fact Burndale had tried, and Holmes knew it. He was making the best of a bad situation.

The snow was not yet more than four or five inches deep; but there was no track, so that their progress was slow. The ride through the great forest would have been monotonous, if the road had not been narrow and rough. This road was merely a bridle path that had been widened only enough to allow a cart to pass. There was no danger of getting lost until one had passed the forest, and had come out on the jack-pine plain.

After riding two or three hours they emerged from the forest onto the plain. Here all signs of a trail at once disappeared. There was no brush. One could drive almost anywhere. The great white spread that nature had laid over the ground made all ways a road, and no road anywhere.

"Ah, this is beautiful!" exclaimed Holmes. "This is a fairy-land for a fully grown man. I declare, Mark! I should expect to see fairies here, if not fair women. But where is your lake with mermaids boating?"

"Off this way, I think," answered Burndale,

pointing with his whip. "Everything, so far, is familiar; and I begin to feel more like myself."

"Good! If your visions turn out to be facts, you are a favored man."

Under the spell of the place and of the hour silence fell between the friends, and so they rode mile after mile. At last Burndale spoke:

"Well, it is midnight. We ought to have seen the castle two hours ago."

"What! Is it midnight? The witchery of the landscape, thrice bewitched in this moonlight, has beguiled the hours—that and your brilliant conversation."

"You are in excellent spirits tonight, Gerald. You may have them dashed yet. This has proved to be a strange country, at least for me; and I have a presentment that you are destined to get mixed up in these affairs, in spite of my care."

Burndale spoke seriously, and Holmes looked at him with a twinkle in his eye, saying; "Well, Mark, are you going to stay here till the Castle of Onar comes to you, brought galloping over the knolls by the magic of its mistress?"

"No—I was thinking. I suppose we might as well keep moving. Go on, John!"

"'Go on to where?' I think I hear John ask. You don't drive him with a very confident rein.

I have not given any attention to the direction that you have been following, supposing that you knew the way. Now that we are lost, show me the object that you have been following."

"Well, look! There she hangs, within two hours of setting—that bright star."

"You have been following that! how long?"

"About four hours," answered Burndale with extreme self-disgust in his tone, pulling the old horse around, as he spoke.

"You have followed the advice of the sage who said, 'Hitch your wagon to a star,' I see. Now let me add a word of advice; Look higher for a star. Otherwise, you may be drawn in a circle, and forever go around the object of your desire. Wake up, man! and look for your love to the north-east of here."

"Of course! We have been following the star as it travelled westward, and have been led in a curve toward the west. Come on around here, John, and retrace your steps for about an hour; then we will make to the east, and ought to find the castle in half an hour more."

They rode on for a little while in silence. At last Burndale spoke, and his voice was troubled: "Gerald, what a strange country this is! I feel awfully queer. Have you any such sensations?"

"Why—yes. But the long distance from any human habitation, except one, and that one so unusual; the peculiar appearance of the country, evidently a wilderness, yet calling to mind a landlord of vast wealth and of rare taste in landscape gardening; the moonlight over all; and the ghoulish hour of the morning—If a man has any sentiment in him, surely it would be active here and now."

Holmes became silent again. His fine gray eyes swept the horizon with a keen, but softened glance; peered deep into the heavens; returned to the rolling ground and dwarf-pine trees, again and again, until his soul was full of grave and lofty thought.

Burndale watched his friend closely to discover what effect this strange country was destined to have upon him. At last he saw Holmes quite abstracted, perhaps day-dreaming, plainly under the spell of this haunted land. This reassured Burndale, not a little; and convinced him that his experience here had not been so much more insane than that of his friend might have been under like circumstances.

"Well, Gerald, you have fallen under the spell more readily than I supposed you would. You have not spoken a word for three-quarters of an

hour, and now it is time that we were making a turn to eastward. How do you feel by this time?"

"What? O, I feel well enough. I was thinking. Make your turn to the eastward, and let us get to the object of our journey. Do you recognize any landmark? It would seem that you must have been on this very spot before, if you traveled about as much as I should have done during your long vacation."

"No. This country, though seemingly diversified by hill and vale, is very much the same for miles around. You get lost within a few rods of your tent. We will strike out due east, and see what we find."

After riding in silence, again, for some time, Burndale asked: "Of what are you thinking so closely, Gerald? I want to know the working of your mind under these influences that affected me so strangely."

"I hardly know, Mark. My thoughts are far from being orderly or consecutive; and yet they are linked together, somewhat, I think. Back there when I spoke of the country suggesting a landlord, my thoughts went on in that direction. Of course my mind naturally turned to the stars, and to the moonlight over all. How wonderfully the Landlord has lit up his estate by night. It is

beautiful. It is grand—sublime! Then I fell to wondering whether or not he took any pleasure in these wilds; why he made them, whether for his own pleasure or for man's. If for his own, does he visit here? Can pure spirit enjoy such material things? It would seem so; for spirits are here, a multitude of them. Ghosts! Mark. You say this ground is almost barren—no beast or bird lives here. Why then was it made, if not for spirits? I christen this region, 'The Haunt of the Spirits.'"

"I guess it is well named. In proof of it, look at this horse. He is usually very docile, as you have observed; but see how he hangs over to one side, and I have to keep pulling him over this way in order to keep our direction at all. See that! Whoa! What ails the old mule! He acts like Baalim's ass. You see your spirit theory is quite correct."

Indeed John was acting in a very refractory manner. He very sullenly refused to keep going straight ahead, but sagged over to one side; and when Burndale insisted that he go straight, he reared and came down with his head well pulled around in the direction in which Burndale sought to drive him, but with his body farther in the direction in which he intended to go. Indeed he

nearly fell over upon the thill. And the harder Burndale pulled, so much the more did the horse obey with his head; but, like some Christians, so much the lower did he lean upon the thill. All were now at a standstill. Slowly the horse let himself down, lower and lower, until he lay quietly in the snow.

"That's right, Burndale, let him down easily, easily—so. There! Dosen't he rest peacefully?"

"So he does. Perhaps—"

"What's that!"

The horse was perfectly quiet, and both men listened with suspended breathing. They seemed to hear, floating in the air above them, the dying echo of distant music. For an instant Burndale felt the same strange sensations that he had felt here before; but he soon discovered a possible solution of the mystery. As sometimes happens when one is lost, he had wandered onto familiar ground, without recognizing it; and then, with strange suddenness, all the wheels in his head seemed to turn, and he found himself in a well known spot. The castle of Onar lay just over the swell of ground in the direction in which the horse had been determined to go, and whence the music seemed to come down from the upper air. But could Onar be there? Burndale was not at

all satisfied, but this explanation steadied him.

"Well, Gerald,—"

"Hush!" whispered Holmes.

The music was heavenly, and it really seemed to come down from heaven. As they listened, the ravishing strains rose higher and higher into the sky, and became fainter and fainter. But in the intense silence—even the horse seemed to be listening—the music still throbbed in the upper air—up and up, until, as their eyes followed the receding and invisible choir, they saw an angel shut the door of Heaven. They were left out. With upturned faces, they sat in silence. Even Burndale, with a partial solution of the mystery, was spell-bound. At last he attempted to speak his friend's name, but the first attempt was only a whisper. Then he cleared his throat and spoke in a low voice—but in the silence it sounded like a shout; they must have heard it in Heaven, yonder—

"Gerald! A-hem! Gerald!"

"What?" replied Holmes, without moving or lowering his eyes.

"What was it?"

"The seraphim."

Then, after a moment's pause, and just before Burndale had recovered from the shock of that

profane answer, he continued: "Did you see that, Mark? It was wonderfully beautiful and suggestive."

"What?"

"That little cloud yonder. It turned, like a gate, just as the music passed beyond hearing, as if the musicians had passed through, and the gate had been closed after them. It was wonderfully well done."

"'Well done!'"

"Yes. Did not I christen this, 'The haunt of the spirits?'"

Holmes fell to musing again. Burndale took the whip, and touched the horse lightly on the quarter, saying; "Get up, sir, and go on. You may take your own course."

A second and sharper touch aroused him. He got up; shook himself nearly out of his harness; and, blowing his nose impatiently, started on a brisk walk in the direction of his choice. A few steps brought them to the summit of the knoll, whence was seen, a few rods farther on, across a little vale, and on a swell of ground, the snow on Onar Castle, glistening in the weird light of the setting moon. The horse stopped abruptly, and neighed aloud.

"Whoa!" said Burndale, in an undertone, as

he jerked the rein. "Be quiet, sir! Stand!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Holmes, in a low voice, as his eye fell on the miniature turrets of the little castle.

The horse gave another impatient blow of his nose, and started forward.

There was no sign of life about the castle: as they drew nearer there appeared every sign of a complete absence of life. The shutters were all closed; the snow lay undisturbed on the window sills; there was not a track to be seen anywhere. They drove entirely around the building, looking carefully at everything, and examining every sign. Then they hitched the horse down by the stable, blanketed him warmly, and gave him his fodder; then they proceeded to make a careful examination of the whole premises. They went everywhere. While Holmes was looking off on the frozen lake, Burndale went to his cellar door. With some difficulty he raised the doors of the cellar-way. He then went down to examine his lock. It was in place, just as he had left it. As he was coming out, Holmes was passing. Both men started a little, and then both laughed in undertone.

"What are you afraid of, Gerald?" Burndale asked in a low voice, rising from the cellar-way.

"Of the dead coming out of the tomb," replied Holmes, in the same subdued tone. Then he spoke more boldly: "But why are we speaking in whispers?" Then he added, in a loud voice: "What are you afraid of?"

"Music, when there is no one to make it. I expected to find Onar here, unreasonable as it may seem to you. It is mighty queer. I wish we were in Castleton, sound asleep, and dreaming this. We should awake in a cold sweat."

"Oh, for the sweat now!" exclaimed Holmes. "The ghosts know that I am cold enough to be one of them."

"So am I. I wish we could get into the house and get warm."

"Are there stoves in the house?"

"A cooking stove; but the house is warmed by a coal furnace, and the cellar is full of fuel."

"Now see how foolish you were not to keep your key."

"Yes; I think Onar was willing that I should have access to the house; and, just now, that would be a blessing. What fools we are to be here at all, at this time of night! Gerald, my feet are freezing."

"Do you think so, really, Mark? I am afraid that mine are too. You are certain that it is not

possible to get in?"

"Perfectly sure. We had better get into the sleigh and wrap up in our blankets and sit on our feet."

This conversation took place under the window of Onar's boudoir. They stood stamping in the snow for a moment longer, and deliberating as to what they had better do next. They finally concluded that, as the horse had been refreshed, and as they had accomplished what they came for, they would return to the station. Just as they were turning away, something fluttered down, and settled in the shadow of a pine a few feet from them. They both saw it.

"What was that?" asked Burndale, in a tone of forced unconcern.

"It looked like a bird of some kind. I thought you said there were not any birds in this region."

"There aren't, usually. Maybe it's a raven. It lies perfectly still."

"Well," said Holmes, as if a wholly new idea had suddenly struck him, "Let's find out what it is."

They approached it, cautiously; then stooped over it, tentatively; finally, Holmes picked it up. It was a large, black ostrich plume, and—what!—a key tied to it with a piece of blue ribbon.

"O-ho! The angel dropped her key, when she locked the gate up there! Now, Mark, if we could only get up there, we should stand a good chance of getting in. Turn around here. Have your wings started yet? I feel as if I could fly."

Mark reached out a hand that trembled visibly in the dim light, and took the key.

"My key!" he said simply, and started for the cellar door. Holmes followed. In a moment they were inside the cellar.

"Ha! This is warm," whispered Burndale.

"There is a fire in the furnace. See the glimmer of light there?"

"There must be some one in the house; and he must have been in here a long time without stepping out or opening a shutter, for there has not been a movement outside since the snow fell," answered Burndale.

"Not probable," responded Holmes. "Why should any one keep the house shut up like this?"

"A coal fire does not burn on forever," replied Burndale.

Holmes did not answer, but he evidently wished to find out something more about the house, and perhaps to find more comfortable quarters, for he remarked: "Does not your hospitality extend to the rooms above?"

"‘My hospitality’? Why, let me see. I was granted the freedom of the house, provided I came in through the cellar. Have you a match?"

Holmes produced a match, and in a moment the whole cellar was revealed to them.

"Come on," said Mark, going to the stairway that led up into the house.

They reached the landing, found the door unlocked, and passed through, just as the match went out.

"Another match," whispered Burndale.

The match was produced and lit. They were in the kitchen. There was not a lamp in sight, and the match went out. Presently Holmes lit another and lighted the gas, remarking; "Your Onar has things convenient. I noticed some plumbing, also, as we came through the cellar; and here are faucets in the kitchen. See! Here is water, too." Holmes turned the faucet, and the water gushed forth.

"I did not notice this when I was here before; but I prefer fire to water just now. The wood has been laid in order here for the application of a match. Now we have a fire."

The young men enjoyed the genial warmth of the fire until they grew drowsy. Then Holmes asked again: "Does not your hospitality extend

to the rooms above? I am getting very sleepy."

"What! Would you presume so far, Gerald?"

"I presume I would, Mark. You play host, or I will play invader."

Burndale scratched his head in perplexity; but finally said; "Of the two evils the first is the least. I'll take some matches from this case. There! Turn out your light, and come on."

They soon found themselves in a large, corner room. It was beautifully furnished. The windows were secured, on the outside, by the heavy iron shutters, before mentioned. Each of these shutters was provided with a slot which could be opened easily by opening the window. Holmes soon discovered this, and opening the slot in the east window he looked out upon the frozen lake. Burndale, looking out through the north window, saw the horse quietly eating his bundle of hay, and quite comfortable in his warm blankets.

When Burndale turned from his observations he found Holmes already making preparations to enjoy the commodious bed that was earnestly inviting a slumberer.

"That is right, Mr. Holmes. Please to make yourself comfortable. Shall I leave you now; or would you prefer to have me occupy the same bed with you, to keep the spooks at a distance?"

"Come, you're wasting time," said Holmes, as he tumbled in.

Burndale followed quickly.

They slept until noon the next day. Then they found victuals, satisfied their hunger, and went out as they came in. Burndale locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and the feather in his hat. Then they searched again, in the broad light of noon, for signs of life outside—all around the house and barn, and down to the boat-house. No signs were there. No foot had been in the snow that fall. There were not more than three or four inches of snow. About three inches fell during the first storm, and then a light crust had formed; on the top of this crust lay an inch of snow that had fallen recently. If any one had come in on the first snow, the tracks would have been too deep to be obliterated by the later snow.

The men rode away a short distance in silence. Then Holmes said; "Mark, I want to go back."

"What for?"

"Because there is some one in that house, who has gone in and out many times since this last snow fell. There must be some explanation of the matter. We came up here to clear up mysteries; but we have only fallen into mysteries

profounder than before—immensely profounder.”

Burndale stopped the horse rather reluctantly.

“Well, Gerald, I do not know what more we can accomplish. But we will go back, if you say so. I am satisfied, and ready to go home.”

“Let’s go back and look once more. If any one is in there, he has kept very still for several hours. Go back softly; he may be stirring now. Hold on! You stay here until I beckon you to follow me.”

“As you please; but we have probably made ourselves quite obnoxious to some one already.”

“Circumstances justify,” replied Holmes, as he turned back. He hurried along, keeping out of sight from the house, as much as possible, and stopping frequently to listen. Once he thought that he heard the growl of a dog; but it was not repeated, and no farther sound was heard, except the wind moaning in the pines. He concluded that he had mistaken this sound for the growl. He reached the house without discovering anything; and then went clear around the house, listening intently, but not hearing a sound. He then called to Burndale, who drove rapidly up to him.

“Did you discover anything?”

“No. Let’s go in again. We were too modest.

We ought to have gone into every room. Really, Mark, there is too much at stake to excuse us for going away without doing everything possible to solve this mystery, even if we cannot find the solution of the one that we came to solve."

"It seems indelicate to ransack the house, Gerald," said Burndale, repovingly.

"I agree with you, my dear Mark; but delicacy will have to give way when the peace of mind, if not more, of two worthy young men is at stake."

"Well, Gerald, perhaps you are right; but I don't like it. I can stand the mystery without having my peace of mind so seriously disturbed as it would be by the memory of having done so indelicate a thing. But, if you are in danger, here, take the key and go in alone."

He handed over the key; but, before Holmes had gone ten feet, he ran after him, took the key from his hand, and led the way himself. Holmes looked at his friend with a curious smile; but he followed without making any remark.

They went through the house, opening every door, looking through every room and closet, and under every bed. They came to the door of Onar's boudoir. It was locked. Holmes rapped. No response was heard. He rapped again, and again. No response. Finally he called aloud:

"Is any one in there? We do not ask you to open the door; but we are bewildered, and would very much like to know whether or not there is any one in the house."

No response.

"You do not know what ruin you may cause by refusing to speak. Mr. Burndale has been very ill; and the mystery con—"

"There! Holmes, enough of that! I will not allow my weakness of mind to be made the basis of any such appeal! Miss Onar, if you are in that room, I beg you to spare me the mortification of knowing it. Our invasion of your castle is inexcusable, however good the excuses that we should formulate might be. Now Holmes, you have done all that you can do. Let us be gone. I am in a sweat, from very shame! This door was locked and all the others open when I went through the house last fall; so probably no one has heard us, after all."

"Your feelings do you credit, my dear Mark; but my case is quite different. I am here to find out certain facts which your physician believes to be of great importance relative to your entire recovery; and I should be recreant to my trust, if I did not do all in my power to get at them. I still hope that, if the lady is within, she will

respond." The last sentence was spoken with an expectant look toward the locked door.

"Come away!" said Burndale, with evident signs of rising anger. "This is a breach of honor. You have not the right to refuse me. I let you in, and as you are a gentleman you will go out at my request."

"Very well, Burndale, I must respect your somewhat shadowy authority, and follow you to the cellar."

They reached the cellar, and were about to go out, when Holmes asked:

"Are you willing that I should take a look around the cellar before we go out?"

"Certainly, Gerald. I hope you are not offended; but if you had been in my place you would have put a stop to this thing much sooner than I did. You cannot quite appreciate the violence of which we have been guilty, because you have never met the lady against whose delicate nature the offense has been committed."

"What is this, Mark?" asked Holmes, from the other side of the cellar.

Burndale went over to him, and they stood together before a strong iron door, heavily barred, and having a lock requiring a very large key. The bolt was shot and the key had been removed.

"I presume," answered Burndale, "that this is the door to a strong room, or possibly a vault."

"If so, the vault is not under the house, Mark; for the door is in the stone wall foundation. Is it another outside cellar-way?"

"I think not; we should certainly have seen it on the outside of the cellar."

"We can easily tell when we go out. Better still, Mark; you stay here, to locate the door for me, and I will go and find the corresponding place in the wall outside."

"All right."

A moment later Holmes called to Burndale to tap on the door. He did so, and Holmes made an answering tap on the wall.

"There you are, right over the door," called Burndale.

"All right! How does it sound when I stamp?"

"Hollow!"

"So it does out here. Come on out!"

Burndale went out, locked the door securely, and shut down the outer doors. Then he joined Holmes, who was stamping around, and listening, seeking to determine the extent of the vault.

"This must be quite a large room, I think," he remarked, as Burndale came up. "What can she use it for? Hardly necessary to have it so

large to hold millions of money and jewels. It is about four feet wide, and it comes way out to here, ten or twelve feet. Indeed, I don't know," stamping, "but it comes farther." Stamp, stamp. "I think not, however. Well, Mark, I suppose we might as well go home."

"I have been ready for some time," answered Burndale.

They rode nearly all the way back in silence. Soon after their arrival the train came, and the friends went home.

CHAPTER IV

"OLE KENTUCK"

A short gallop brought Onar to the spot where she had left Dinah, when she went back to find out certainly about the fastenings of the cellar door. Onar, in the kindness of her heart, had, herself, ridden back to make the investigation, knowing that Dinah would almost as willingly face death as to go back alone to the deserted house. Now she rode up gaily, and crying out, "Come on mammy," flew past her, and up the trail, at a sharp canter.

Dinah, who was no mean horsewoman, and as nimble as any cat, in spite of her eighty years, shook the reins on her horse's neck, and urged him into a gallop, exclaiming, all along:

"Git up dar, git 'long! Dat white sister ob yo'n 's only a zephyr, but she go lak a gale. Git 'long!"

C'ld John, the brother of Zephyr by courtesy

only, ambled along as best he could, and Dinah grumbled at every contact of his feet with the ground: "O John, go softah!"

Soon the musical "Hoo-hoo" of Onar floated sweet and clear from a distant knoll.

"O lor'! Hoo-hoop!" yelled Dinah, in response. But, with all her fuss, she managed to get along very well, and soon came up with Onar who sat waiting for her, caressing her horse and talking to Huraldo: "Is Zephyr a little too fleet for you, old fellow? Why! What's the matter, sir? Hu, did Mr. Burndale give you this key?"

"Woo-woo-wuh!"

"He did, did he! Well, I will carry it, and then you can breathe more freely."

Dinah now came up, grumbling because John was so rough. Onar did not hear her. She turned her horse's head into the trail, and mused along the way, toying with the key. So they rode on, until it began to grow dusky in the vales, and Dinah began to get extremely nervous. Finally she could not restrain herself any longer; and riding up so that she could speak easily to her mistress, she said softly; "Does Misse notice dat it gittin, da'k?"

No, Misse did not notice that or anything else. She did not answer: indeed, she did not hear.

Dinah was in a state bordering upon awe. She fell back a little, and rode in silence. But her eyes were everywhere; and the whites of them, as they rolled here and there into every dusky corner, would have frightened a hundred spooks away. It is a pity that she did not know it!

They had now passed the border of the jack-pine region, and had entered the great forest of native timber. On account of the height of the trees and the denseness of the underbrush, it was quite dark here. But still Onar dreamed on. She was in the spirit world where there is no darkness, no night, no danger and no fear of danger.

They finally reached the station; soon, they, and the animals also, were aboard the train, and rushing southward through the night.

“It clar daylight, Misse Onar, an’ all de folks in de car done got up. De cullud gemman jus’ mak de las’ call for breakfas’. You gwine sleep right fro to ole Kentuck?”

“O Dinah, you interrupted such a beautiful dream!”

The train rushed and rumbled on hour after hour, until finally Onar saw the broad sweep of the Ohio, majestically encircling the base of a distant hill. Her eyes danced at the sight, and

a slight flush warmed her cheek. Dinah came to her in a flurry of excitement, crying; "See de ribber, Misse! We almos' to ole Kentuck. We cross de ribber, an' dere we be. Did you send word to ole Mose to meet you?"

"Yes. Will you be glad to see Moses?"

"Law, now, Misse, ob cose I's po'ful glad to see my ole man. I got de bes' ob you dere. You done loose de bes' part ob life, honey. I spect yo' might get one, do, sho nuff," she added with a mischievous little laugh.

As twilight descended, the train to which our travelers had been transferred pulled out toward the interior of the state. The twilight deepened slowly, and softly merged into moonlight. The silent hills and valleys gave no sign that they had once been important in the making of a great nation's history. But the bright eyes that looked on them as they whirled past revealed, within the body that sat as motionless as they, a soul that reveled in the memory of days when these hills were all alive; and sometimes full of threatening noise. Yes, she seems to hear the earlier sounds of wars less noisy. She remembers the Indian who through these little hills, then clad in virgin forests, followed with fleet foot the panting fleeing game; or, horrible in his war-paint, sent up that

awful whoop of death upon the trail of some fast fleeing foe; who turned, at last, to give and take the deadly wounds of tomahawk and spear.

As the train drew near to the station at Stuart the contour of the hills became more and more familiar to the watching eyes. The face of our traveler became more spiritual, with a strangely immaterial beauty. She might be old, very old, as angels are. Yet it was Onar's face, and it might be that twenty summers had not yet painted their landscapes in those dreamy eyes. Was she from some pre-historic race, unfallen, beyond the power of time to touch and mar, immortal, all of whom but she had been translated to another world?

"Misse Onar, we done got dere."

With a quickly indrawn breath, as if it were a sigh of waking, almost a stifled sob, she turned; then answered quietly; "Very well, Dinah, I am ready."

The train stopped, and Dinah hastened out in advance with the luggage. As she reached the platform of the car she called out: "Hi, Mose!"

"Hi, Dinah!" came the response of Moses.

As soon as Onar had alighted Moses came to her with his cap in his hand, saying; "I done druv de kerrige ober, kase I low maybe Misse

rose and fell to the rhythm of her ringing hoofs.

“Now let him catch us with his famous racer! A-ha! my Kentucky queen, do you feel the blood of the Darley Arabian, coursing through the veins of his great-great-grandson, Eclipse, bounding through your body? The stoutest of all blood! Let him catch us!”

So they coursed about a mile.

“So-ho! Zephyr, so-ho! This is a rather swift gait for Hu. We can go more slowly and still keep out of the way of poor Frank and his lumbering race-horse. So-ho! Steady! I don’t hear him. Whoa!”

There was no sound on the road; and, walking her horse along, listening, Onar reached the boundaries of her plantation. The place is very beautiful. At the western boundary of the plantation one emerges from between parallel ranges of hills out onto a plateau, tilted to an angle of about five or six degrees from north to south, the northern boundary of which, about a half mile distant, rises into a rugged range of hills.

Zephyr now became so impatient to reach home that Onar gave her the rein, and she sped along past beautiful fields on both sides of the road, past the orchard on the north side, to the arched gateway opening to a quaint old house of colonial

architecture, standing well back on the north side of the road, among stately trees of native growth. With a happy neigh she turned in at the ivy-grown gateway, galloped up the gravelled drive that swept gracefully between the arching trees of the well kept grounds, up to the stately old mansion that might be as old as Onar, or that might not be older than she.

The grounds were brilliantly illuminated, and here and there, up the drive, dusky forms were stationed with torches. As soon as Onar passed one of these torch-bearers he fell in behind with the shout, "Welcome, welcome home to Misse!" So that when she arrived at the house she was attended by fifteen or twenty men and boys, some of them as black as the midnight when she rode upon Onar lake; all of them bowing and crying; "Welcome home!" From the wide veranda that extended nearly around the house, several black women and girls crowded down to meet "Misse." In and out through the group Huraldo bounded, receiving caresses from all, and heedless of the numerous friends of his own species who sought to get a word with him.

Onar bowed and smiled to all; and held up her hand for silence, which followed at once. Then she spoke, and in the music of her voice there

could not be detected the slightest murmur of a minor key: "You have given me a royal welcome, my people. I am very glad to be home again, and to find you all here, and well. God is good. Let us never forget to thank him. Make merry as long as you choose to-night. Dinah will tell you of our adventures. To-morrow I will see you all. Good night!"

Amid many a hearty, "Good night to Misse!", Moses assisted her to alight; and she passed into the house.

Zephyr was led away to her companions, some of whom were brothers and sisters and children; Huraldo at last consented to frolic with his kin; Dinah led the way to a gathering of her children and grand-children in the servants' hall; Onar, after a light repast, went to her luxuriant rooms above, in the front of the great house.

Having donned a simple white gown, she put out her light, sank into a low seat by the window that looked out toward the north, out across her beautiful grounds, through the tree-tops which had been arranged generations before to permit this vista, out across the road and the fields that stretched away and swept gracefully down to the serpentine Kentucky, slowly and placidly wending its way, beneath the cold moonlight, to the

mightier waters which it was ever swelling, but never filling, away to the mountains beyond, that had formed the limit of her vision—for how long?

A long time Onar sat absorbed in meditation; indeed, so absorbed was she that her body seemed to be resting there, waiting till her spirit should return from its winged flight to the distant hills and along sinuous rivers to the broad Mississippi, the gulf and the ocean; and then for its return by way of the fixed stars and the old, old moon whose face she knew as that of a long known and well loved friend.

As her soul reached out in its yearning after the spirit world, in which she lived as one born blind lives among his unseen friends, her lips began to move, and the following words fell into the silence:—

“Alone! Ah, no. I should be untrue to you all, black companions of my life, dumb fields and sparkling river, and ye distant mountains whose soft outlines have appealed to my heart for generations: ye are friends and companions. And I may claim you, too, stars of this summer night. But you are so far away! Long as I have traveled, I have never quite reached you yet, so deep in your ether spaces, so far away, so cold! But I claim you, my beautiful queen of night.

And I claim thee, ‘Father of lights, with whom is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning;’ and I claim thy Son, ‘the Ancient of days,’ Immanuel. I am the last of my race. No white face welcomes me to my ancestral home. Yet I am not alone. God is everywhere; and perhaps the freed spirits of my forefathers are hovering around the old— I must see them!”

Hereupon Onar arose abruptly. It was near the hour when the spirits of the departed walk, sometimes in visible form. Onar stepped out into the great hall, now as silent as the grave; and as dark, except for the moonlight streaming uncertainly in through the half-closed shades. She paused a moment, listening; then went on, down the broad stair, to the ancestral hall where were hung the portraits of her family for many generations back. The whole room was devoted to relics and heirlooms of the family. As she approached the door leading from the lower hall into this room she stopped before it to read again, as she had so often read, the one word, STUART; and to decipher the coat of arms with which it was adorned. Then she entered the room, and lighted it until every part was aglow, revealing many curious reminders of the days and of the countries of heraldry and of ancient chivalry.

But that to which Onar's attention at once reverted was the long line of portraits, painted in oil by the best artists that the times in which they were done could afford. This line of portraits was double, and extended nearly around the room; the lower line was life size, painted at the age of twenty-one, for the men, and eighteen, for the women. Above many of these portraits were life size paintings of the same persons at the age of forty-five. Onar, when the room was light, paused before the portrait of herself, at the foot of the long line. The likeness was excellent; and the picture seemed to be alive. But even more wonderful was the resemblance, almost as exact as that of copies would be, between this portrait and the three that preceeded it. These three were the portraits of Onar's mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Above this last picture a perch had been fastened into the wall, and upon it, very lifelike, with its head toward the following generations, sat a raven.

Farther up the line were some decided family resemblances; but the marvelous likeness that we find in these four is not repeated elsewhere. Here and there a portrait is lacking from the upper line, indicating that the person represented there had not reached the age of forty-five.

The upper line came to its end in a male figure immediately preceeding these last four women. These portraits represented only the eldest child in each succeeding generation; other members of the families were represented by their photographs, preserved in many volumes of books that could be seen in regular order about the room.

Onar sat down upon a divan that was placed facing these four extraordinary women. After sitting in mute study for some time, she again took up her soliloquy:—

"How much do mental and spiritual traits have to do with the development of form and feature? To what extent can we safely reason back from similarity of form and feature to similarity, if not more, of mind and spirit? We four are one in form and feature; and more, we are one in mind and spirit. I have the diaries of them all. They might have been written by the same person. I might have written them. Did I? Were the heathen Pythagoras and his followers so wholly wrong in their doctrine of Metempsychosis? Is that one weak corner of old Dinah's mind sound, after all; and am I my great-grandmother? There have been four bodies of us; and now no doubt three spirits are hovering around me; unless, indeed, the spirit that now

animates my body has animated all four bodies in turn. I almost believe it. It seems to me that I wrote those diaries: they are full of my own soul's experiences, wrought out under different circumstances. If so, what of our royal ancestor?" She arose and turned toward another portrait, far up the line, that bore a remarkable likeness to the four. But she did not cross the room to look more closely at it, for a low exclamation outside the house, and the hurrying of feet down the drive startled her for a moment. She quickly turned out the lights and ran swiftly and noiselessly up to her former seat at the window, which was open; and she heard, plainly, the peculiar hoof beats that had arrested her attention on her way home from the station. She sighed heavily; and murmuring, "Poor Frank," sought her long deferred rest.

And Frank? Frank is a neighbor's son who has known Onar all her life. They played together in childhood; they tramped the woods, and rode together in youth; but less and less frequently, as they grew up; until, finally, they went away to different colleges, and drifted apart. Upon their return, Frank had sought to resume the old familiarity; but Onar held him in check until she could see how he had developed. She

found that her fears were well grounded. He had become dissolute, and offensive to all her finer nature. He had wooed her persistently, but up to the present she had been able to keep him from speaking.

He had not heard of her return, and it was a mere accident that he was upon the road she had traveled to-night. While she had been away his little heart had been full of anxiety. He undoubtedly loved her to the utmost of his ability to love. He dreamed of her, and his nerves not always being in the best state, he once or twice thought that he had surely seen her riding her mare. But, upon seeking to put himself into her company, he had found—nothing. This had frightened him beyond measure; and, being full of the superstition common to many who are reared among the negroes, he had decided that Onar was dead, and that he had seen her spook. He mourned a little, drank a little harder, and kept away from the places that she would be apt to haunt. Until to-night he had not made any inquiries at Onar's home; but, finding himself in the neighborhood, and also a little steadier than usual, he concluded to ride home by way of the old Stuart plantation; and to stop, perhaps, and make the long deferred inquiries. What was his

dismay when, in the road at some distance in advance of him, he saw again the vision that he had seen twice before. He brought his horse to a stand still, and saw the vision simply vanish down the road. He sat with staring eyes and open mouth, an equestrian statue of horror. Finally his sense of hearing seemed to return, and he felt sure that he heard the patter of hoofs. This somewhat restored him to his senses. He rode slowly back and forth along the road, trying to make up his mind whether he had seen a vision again, or whether Onar had actually returned. He finally concluded to ride on past the house; and, if he felt so inclined when he arrived there, to stop. When he reached the gate, he hesitated for a moment; but, seeing the house alight, he dismounted, tied his horse beside the road, and proceeded cautiously up to the lighted window. The curtain was not very closely drawn, and he succeeded in getting a peep into the room where Onar was studying out the problem of her being. The poor fellow's peek-hole was so small that he could see distinctly only the life size portrait of Onar. He was gazing intently at it when Onar arose and stepped into the range of his vision. She, in her white apparel, seemed to step out from the frame. It was enough, certainly, to

satisfy any reasonable man that her spook was abroad. With a half suppressed exclamation, he hurried away.

Frank Weatherly did not sleep well that night. He had special reason for fearing Onar's spook, even more than he loved Onar herself. But this will appear as we proceed.

Within a few days it became entirely certain that Onar had returned, in the flesh; and Frank regained his ordinary assurance. Two weeks, or thereabout, after the event mentioned here had occurred, he presented himself at Onar's home, asking to see her. She could not well refuse, and so received him with dignified hospitality. She treated him with courtesy, but quietly repelled every attempt at familiarity. The old relations must never be restored.

Frank at once began a regular siege. He called almost every day; and, in spite of all discouragements, persevered with a diligence and confidence which did him great credit. As Onar's attitude toward him became colder, his purpose to win her; or, at any rate, to possess her, grew stronger. At last the crisis came. They were alone in Onar's home. The conversation had been fitful, and the call embarrassing. Weatherly had come, fortified with liquor, determined

to "have it out;" and Onar, divining his purpose, and seeing his condition, did not feel inclined to act the part of the agreeable hostess. After one of the long periods of silence that punctuated too freely for comfort the very feeble conversation, Weatherly arose. Onar stood, at once, saying; "Are you going now? I have a message to send to your father. If you will wait a moment, I will send it in to you." She turned toward the door; but he reached it first; and, placing his back against it, said; "Why do you treat me in this way, Onar Melbourne? You have held me off at arm's length ever since you returned. Can't you remember the old days when you and I used to be always together; and, I hope I can say honestly and truthfully for you as well as for myself, loved each other. I love you more than ever, and I ask your love in return." He stepped toward her extending his hands.

Onar stood with her hands clasped behind her. She did not move; but answered quietly; "I am sorry for this, Mr. Weatherly. I have honestly tried to prevent it, as I think you will agree. The comradeship of childhood does not always foretell comradeship for life. Since those days we have developed in opposite directions. I do not love you, and I never can love you as I must love the

man who is to be my comrade for life, if such a man there be.”

“But, Onar, why can not you love me? I have education; my family is one of the very oldest and best; I have wealth.”

“Hush, Mr. Weatherly! I could never love a man for any or for all such considerations. It must be plain to you that we are far apart. Please forget that this scene has ever taken place, and turn your thoughts toward some one who will be more in accord with your tastes. And, Mr. Weatherly, you have been drinking to-night. Please let me pass.”

“Not yet. You will change your mind; and meantime give me one of those sweet kisses for which you used to be so famous.”

“What do you mean, sir! Stand aside!” cried Onar, now thoroughly aroused.

“Onar Malbourne, you had better take care. Unless you take me now, I will take you whether you will or wont. Not to-day nor to-morrow, but when you least suspect it and are least prepared. Take counsel of wisdom.”

Unobserved Onar pressed a secret button with her foot, and said, calmly; “You had better go now, Mr Weatherly. And do not come again. I am sorry to have trouble with my neighbors;

but you have insulted me most outrageously."

As she ceased speaking, Moses entered the room, asking; "Did you ring, Misse?"

Weatherly answered with an oath; "No, you old fool!" and struck him a stinging blow.

"What does Misse say?" asked old Moses, with quiet dignity.

"Yes, Moses, I rang. Show Mr. Weatherly the door!"

When Weatherly had given his cowardly blow there was a growl somewhere; but Onar had raised her hand a little, and all was quiet.

"Not till I have had a good-bye kiss, dear."

His hand laid hold of her wrist.

There was no growl, but a scream of pain as a pair of jaws like a trap and a vice snapped upon the arm of the hand that held Onar's wrist; and Weatherly was led forth without other noise or commotion than that which he himself made. He went home mad with pain and wounded pride. During the next week two attempts were made to kill Huraldo, both of which were thwarted by the faithful Moses and his sons. Onar, alarmed for the safety of her pet, and faithful protector, took him away from the neighborhood.

CHAPTER V

AWAKENING.

Onar reached Otia, a little station about six miles south of Brookings, early one winter afternoon; and set out along the rough wagon road that led to the west. The walk to Onar castle, about twelve miles due west of Otia, would not, in summer, have been anything unusual for her; but the snow seriously impeded her progress. Like a true pedestrian she estimated the distance and the power of her endurance, and set her pace at about three miles an hour. This ought to bring her to the castle about three o'clock in the afternoon. At eleven o'clock she came to the end of the road. She then took to the woods with no guide but her compass. At half past two she came to the eastern end of Onar Lake. Following the north shore of the lake, she came to the path which she had made the previous summer. She and Huraldo followed this path until they

came nearly to the boat-house. Onar now stopped and called Huraldo to her side.

"Hu, I do not feel so secure up here as I once did. Let's keep out of sight for a few days. Do you suppose the ice is strong enough to hold us?"

Huraldo wagged his tail; then he immediately stepped out upon the frozen lake. Onar followed cautiously, trying the strength of the ice. It was safe. In a moment more they were at the outer door of the boat-house. In this door was a slide, large enough to admit an arm. This slide Onar opened; and, reaching in the full length of her arm, felt about until her fingers came in contact with a key, which hung just within reach, if one knew where to find it. With this key she unlocked the door, and she and Huraldo entered the boat-house. The tracks which they had made could not be seen from the bank next to the castle. One would need to go out upon the lake, or well down the north shore, in order to discover them.

Having entered the boat-house, Onar shut the door, locked it, returned the key to the nail from which she had taken it, closed the slide, and following the little platform that extended around three sides of the boat-house, came to the stairs that led up to the door opening out upon the walk that led up to the castle. But instead of

going up these stairs, she took a lamp from a shelf beneath them, a match from a match-safe that hung at hand, and lit the lamp. The boat-house was lined with iron plates, in the form of panels nearly as large as ordinary doors. These panels were riveted together with large-headed rivets. Onar looked steadily for a moment at one of the panels just at the foot of the stairs, pushed upon it and laughed lightly. Then she made Huraldo lie down at the foot of the stairs while she wandered aimlessly down one side of the boat-house and back. But when she returned the second time the panel that she had touched had rolled back, revealing a dark hole, from which a close, musty rush of air issued, causing Onar's lamp to flicker, and causing Huraldo to give a short inquiring bark. Onar and Huraldo entered this musty hole. The door rolled noiselessly back to its place, a spring clicked, and from the outside it could not be opened except by one who knew the secret key.

The dark hole proved to be a tunnel along which they rapidly passed until, at about midway between the two ends, Onar stopped, removed a loose stone, and picked up a very large key. They soon came to the farther end of the tunnel. With the large key Onar unlocked a strong iron

door, and she and Hu were in the cellar of Onar Castle. Shutting and locking the door, she removed the key, and shot a heavy iron bolt. Then she proceeded to build a fire in the furnace. This done, she turned on the water and gas, went up stairs, and soon had a rousing fire in the kitchen stove.

While bustling about the kitchen, preparing a warm supper for herself and Huraldo, she entered into conversation with him.

"Hu, it would be pleasanter to open the shutters, and let the daylight in, would it not? But I think we will wait awhile. We can manage nicely for what time we need to be down here, and soon we will go up under our skylight. There we shall have all the light there is. If that drunken Weatherly and his companions should be able to follow us, intending to kill you, my dear old Hu, I prefer that they should not find any signs of us about the house. He wanted to kill you! The villain! And he said he would take me—surely he would not dare to use violence upon me! But he actually took hold of me, intending to—Hm!"

Here Onar made a very decided rattle with the stove utensils, and Huraldo gave a short, angry bark; both of which were very expressive of

contempt and anger. It was several moments before Onar regained her usually unruffled temper; and they were moments in which the supper made rapid progress. At last she said; "Well, well, Hu, we must not be ill-tempered about it. Only it is a little hard not to have any one in the world who is your rightful protector."

Huraldo whined.

"Yes, Hu, you do all you can; and you are a good dog. You are a great comfort to me; and you took hold of Weatherly nobly. Good dog!"

She sat down and took the noble fellow's head in her lap, toying with his silken ears, and smiling upon him; but, in defiance of the smile, there were tears in her eyes; and one of them fell upon Huraldo's nose. He drew back, sniffed and barked. Onar laughed, and proceeded to eat her supper.

When supper was over and the work was cleared away, they went up to Onar's boudoir, about half of which was ceiled with glass. Two feet directly above this glass ceiling, there was a skylight in the roof. The portion of the attic where this glass ceiling and the skylight were, was partitioned off; and the opening thus formed was beautifully decorated on the inside. The

large sashes of glass were so arranged that they could be easily rolled open or shut by means of little pulleys and ropes, manipulated from Onar's boudoir.

As Onar glanced upward, upon entering this room, she discovered that rain was falling, and that the snow had all been washed from the skylight. She wondered whether the sash would stick. She had never been here in winter before; but when the plumbing was done provision was made for opening the skylight, in winter, by running a steam pipe from the furnace all around it, so that in cold weather the sash might be kept from freezing fast. Onar now tried the pulleys, and found everything in working order.

By evening the whole house was perfectly comfortable; and Onar, being exceedingly tired from her long tramp, retired very early and slept soundly until morning.

During the latter part of the night the rain turned to sleet, and a light crust, not sufficient to sustain a man's weight, had formed; and now snow was quietly and rapidly falling.

Onar looked out through the slots in her shutters, and up through her skylight to the leaden sky. Something of the gloom and loneliness of the day and of the place settled into her heart.

She sought relief in her day-dreams; but they failed to satisfy her. Spirits that habitually soar into the realm of dreams, almost as habitually sink into the valley of unrest. All day Onar wandered from room to room, seeking to interest herself in something, anything. She tried to read; but her books were tame, compared with her own dream ideals. Even her instruments of music seemed to refuse their usual response to her touch.

As night came on, the shadows, which all day had been hovering around her spirit, fell softly and quietly, as fell the shadows of evening. The flood-tide of her soul came surging back from every high-water mark that it had ever reached—back and down into the deepest places of mid-ocean's unfathomed depths. A few weeks ago a storm was gathering over this spot, and Onar's spirit had called from her instruments of music imitations of nature's most terrific moods, blended with the most awful depths of human fear and agony. But although her soul had been most mightily moved, so that she had felt the pain of storm and shipwreck, yet, by some subtle power of the mind, the very pain she felt had been her pleasure. The poetic soul delights in creating scenes of deepest suffering, and

itself suffers in creating them; but that suffering is its greatest pleasure. Onar arose from her harp that night and withdrew her spell from Burndale with an unconscious, but triumphant elation of spirit that was like an intoxication. Her wild mingling with the elements, in the storm that followed, were largely the result of that elation, that joy in the sorrow that she had called into expression from her organ, piano and harp. But her suffering to-night is not like that, a real suffering projected upon the background of her volition. This is a real suffering, born of the experiences of her soul. It came uncalled. It refuses to leave when bidden. Indeed, now that her soul has fallen into the spell of the sorrows to which she is peculiarly the heir, all the sensitiveness, the delicacy and beauty of her spirit, only make her the more capable of keen suffering.

But she was outwardly calm, except for her restless wandering from room to room. At last she went to her boudoir; and, looking up, saw that the storm had cleared, and that the stars were shining. She reclined upon a couch from which she could look up into the deep sky. The moon was shining, and its familiar face gave her some sense of companionship; but, in the end,

that so unreal companionship only increased her loneliness. At last she murmured:—

“Where, where is my spirit world, that I am so lonely? Oh, I have never heard those tender, throbbing words of love that mothers speak! I can not remember that any one has ever kissed me and called me by some endearing name. Father, mother, sister, brother—I do not know the meaning of the words! Am I, in spite of all my faith that my spirit, not my body, is I—am I still a prisoner in this body? Why should I be? I have nothing for which to live. No one of all the world is happier because I live—unless it be you, Huraldo; and Dinah; and the other dusky people on the old plantation. If I must live in the body and have companionship only in the spirit world, why should not my body give me up and let me have a freer intercourse with my friends? Yet life must be for some purpose.” Then she thought long and deeply. “But my life is purposeless.” With the clearing of the sky is coming a clearer spiritual vision. “I must find out that for which I live, and live for that. What is it? What can it be? How have I missed it? O, I can’t breathe in here,” she exclaimed, springing to her feet, and throwing open her skylight clear to the upper air. Then

she fell to walking up and down the room with a strong, nervous step. "I was so happy here last summer! I had such lovely dreams! But, I see: my life is slipping away in dreams; and God gave me my life for a purpose. I have forgotten my life, in my dreams of life."

She stopped beneath the skylight; and, turning her pure face upward, sweetly breathed this simple prayer: "O God, I have overslept in my dreams of waking. Is the day dawning? Let the day dawn, I pray thee! Awaken me fully, for I am late and would do my day's task yet."

She stood a little longer gazing into heaven, as if waiting for an answer. A few clouds were floating in the sky; but it was cold, and with a slight shiver she turned away; and, wrapped in thought, passed out of her room and down the stair, leaving the skylight and all the doors open to the night. She walked on, and mechanically sat down on the organ bench. She touched the keys; and, lo! her power had returned, vastly multiplied. The organ seemed a living being beneath her touch, a being instinct with holiest life, and throbbing with desire to express the fullness of the life that pulsed within. At first the wordless song was plaintive, pleading, full of a sad entreaty. It was the continuation of the

prayer for light. The struggle was severe and long. The upturned face was full of prayer; was strong in prayer, with all the untold strength of woman's matchless love; was pure and sweet, with the unsullied sweetness of maiden purity; was spiritual—Ah! has the fettered soul escaped, and is this the angel? If not, and God answers this prayer, wafted to him in the strains of music that the angels pause to hear, and gives the dawning and the mission, then shall this marvelously beautiful and gifted girl become an angel of light to many a soul whose day began with rain and never cleared, not even when the curfew rang the dark day out.

Her prayer grows stronger, and a little bolder. An angel is beside her now, and the utter loneliness is giving way. The organ tones are a little heavier, and a stronger stop is speaking: "My mission, O God, my mission! Save me from the day that falls to evening with my task unfinished or, indeed, untouched." Still deeper and stronger runs the song, and pleads the prayer. It floats out, and up the stair; and up, and out into the midnight; and on up into Heaven, where God is who hears and answers prayer; it floats softly and sweetly down from Heaven to the snow-mantled earth.

With all her soul in the organ, Onar still pleads on. But—is there not some shading of the thought, some yielding of the awful strain of prayer? No, no; but, in the midst of all the sombre stops, the celeste stop is sounding, gaining power, is triumphing over all, will conquer all, has conquered now! Celeste! Gloria! Allelujah! Ah, see that upturned face, lit by the undying fires of an immortal love and a triumphant faith! Steady now, sweet Onar, blessed of God and angels, and to be yet blessed of men; let this transport of our souls calm slowly, gently, softly. The closing of the song is sweet, and low, and pensive, throbbing with restrained intensity of love, and hope, and joy.

The song is ended. Her hand falls into her lap, and Huraldo touches it with his cold nose.

"Poor Hu, has your mistress been selfish all day? It is all over now, old fellow. Now for a quick run through the tunnel, and a turn on the ice, and to bed, all in five minutes."

It was actually done—that is, up to the return from the ice, replenishing the furnace fire, and reaching the boudoir. But just as Onar reached for the rope to close the skylight, she was horrified by the neighing of a horse. Huraldo gave a low, "wough!" and stood with one foot

raised, listening. Onar recovered herself in a moment; and, realizing the need of perfect quiet, spoke decidedly to Huraldo: "Hu, no noise!"

Huraldo's response was a slight wag of the tail.

Onar went quietly to the door, locked and bolted it. Then she went to a window and looked out through a slot in the shutter. The sound of a sleigh passed around the house and out of hearing. Onar opened the window a little, that she might hear better. Before long the conversation recorded elsewhere took place under her window. With great relief she recognized the voice of Burndale, and heard Holmes speak his name. Huraldo also recognized the voice, and came very near to giving its owner a welcome. But Onar was watching him, and she raised a warning finger in time.

The night had grown bitterly cold, and Onar was planning how she might close the skylight, so that all of the warm air should not escape as it came from the furnace, when the conversation under her window awakened her sympathy, and greatly distressed her. It was evident that these men were not seeking her, and that they were in serious danger of great injury from their exposure. Should she make known her presence, and let them in? She had perfect confidence in Mr.

Burndale, and she had full confidence in herself and in Huraldo.

While she was hesitating she heard the key spoken of, and thought of the plan of throwing it out to them. She tied the key to one end of a plume, and with a well-directed swing sent it free through the skylight and clear of the house. She heard the exclamation, "What's that!" and the subsequent conversation. She thought that Holmes was rather irreverent, but could not help smiling broadly at his good spirits.

She heard them go around to the cellar-way and raise the outer doors, and took advantage of the cover of this noise to close her windows and the skylight. With bated breath she heard the men come up the stairs. With relief she heard them go into the room across the hall. She was a little indignant; but she was glad to have them comfortable; and she had, herself, furnished the means by which it was possible for them to be so. After all, because she must sit up all night, would she have them do so; and a good bed unoccupied? Certainly not! She smiled grimly at the novelty of the situation, and prepared to make herself as comfortable as her circumstances would permit. First, she took a ribbon and secured Huraldo's tail to his leg. This was necessary

because the good natured fellow was always smiling, and he smiled with his tail. When he was lying down those smiles very frequently became audible. Next she spread a thick, soft quilt upon the floor, and made Huraldo lie down at one end of it. Then she took a pillow, put it on Hu, and lay down upon the quilt, drawing one edge of it over herself, and placing her head upon the pillow. This arrangement of the pillow was necessary because Hu sometimes dreamed that he was catching things, and growled and barked in his sleep. By this arrangement Onar would be able to check him before he betrayed them. Also, if Hu began to breathe so hard that there was danger of a snore, she could check that. On the whole it was a good arrangement, both for comfort and for safety. It was companionable, too; and both Hu and his mistress liked it. Onar had not the least intention of going to sleep; it would not be safe, with two strange men in the house, although there could not be any possible danger of anything, except discovery. However, she felt very easy in her mind, and glad that the men were comfortable, and—the sun was blazing down through the skylight!

It was well that Hu's tail was tied. He had

been awake a long time, and was so very glad to have his mistress come back from dreamland!

Onar wondered whether or not the men had left, and whether or not she had been discovered during her sleep.

She was not left long in doubt; for soon there was a stir in the opposite room, and the men came out. Huraldo heard the noise, and for a moment seemed to have forgotten the entrance of the men during the night; and he would certainly have made known his presence, if Onar had not been watching him closely. As it was, she clasped both of her hands around his nose and mouth not a second too soon. She instantly released him, as he needed only the reminder, and to be helped over the first moment of his surprise. Then she shook her finger at him, and laughed silently. Huraldo was ashamed and hung his head; but he would have laughed with her, if his tail had not been fettered. The attempt greatly amused Onar, who seemed to be in excellent spirits this morning. She laughed again, in that happy, silent way, and untied the ribbon from Huraldo's tail. He expressed his appreciation of her confidence by an unusually vigorous wagging.

So, watching Huraldo carefully, and listen-

ing to the men, the time passed until they took their first departure. Onar saw them drive off, her feather in Burndale's hat, with contending emotions of relief, loneliness and mirthfulness. Through the slot in her window she saw the conference and the return of Holmes. She was so intent upon her scrutiny of this new face, looking directly at her window as he came toward the house, that the listening Huraldo, before she was aware of his intention, had expressed his disapproval of the returning steps. She turned quickly and noiselessly, with upraised finger; but the sound of footsteps outside had ceased. Dog and mistress stood facing each other, Onar bending slightly forward, Huraldo looking up at her, his head on one side and his foot upraised, both absolutely motionless, listening intently.

Presently the footsteps came on. Onar slowly shook her finger. Hu barely moved his tail in acknowledgement of her request for absolute silence.

When Holmes called to Burndale to come back to the house, Onar returned to her quilt; again fettered Huraldo's tail; and, seating herself, motioned to him to lie down beside her with his head in her lap. In this attitude they waited patiently during the searching of the house.

Huraldo required constant attention. More than once he was at the point of breaking control. If it had not been for his wonderful training, and the eider-down quilt, they would certainly have been heard.

Finally every door had been opened, and Onar knew that in a moment her door-knob would turn. She prepared Huraldo by whispering softly in his ear, and holding his nose in her hands. They passed that ordeal safely, and then Holmes' appeal began. As he proceeded, Onar's face grew grave with anxiety. She did not fully comprehend how Burndale had been so mysteriously affected; but she could understand how, if he had been ill and delirious, and was not yet wholly recovered, mentally, a simple knowledge of her presence might relieve him, if he were really doubtful concerning the reality of her existence. Her kind heart was again moved as it had been when she sent the key to their relief; and twice her lips parted to speak, when each time Holmes continued his appeal. Just as Burndale at last interrupted him, she had actually made a move toward rising and appearing before them. But Burndale's indignant protest checked her. She felt that his high sense of honor was noble, and for a moment feared that Holmes was not to be

trusted; but before the conversation was over she fully trusted both men. She respected Burndale's chivalry, and rather liked Holmes for his slight dash of impudence.

She concluded that Burndale would survive, and heard the little conflict over with a beaming smile.

When they had finally driven away for the last time, she and Huraldo had a little frolic about her room. As there were no signs of a second return, she opened the kitchen door, and they had a run around the house. Onar then prepared dinner, and ate heartily. She looked at her watch and found that it was three o'clock. "I shall have ample time!" she exclaimed. "There is not much snow, and the crust will support my weight. It will be better walking than when I came. I can take the evening train at Otia and get home to-morrow."

She immediately went about putting the house in order to leave, and as she worked she talked on to herself and to Huraldo:

"They will have this matter in which you were involved all made right by the time we get back, old fellow." Then, after a pause; "I must get about my mission." Pause. "I must let my dream life go, and learn to live in the prosaic

world. I must get among people. But where shall I go? What can I do?"

And now, true to her name and the name of her great-grandmother, Onar, and true to the nature of this race of lovely women, she fell to dreaming of her mission and of how she should perform it.

She finished her work mechanically, prepared herself for the return home, and went out as she came in. Before dark she had left the forest, and had come out upon the rude road. She reached Otia in time for the evening train which she took for Cincinnati. She found an unoccupied berth in the sleeping car, where she sat and continued her dream of her mission and of how she should accomplish it. Finally the porter asked her if she would have her berth made up. She did not seem to hear him. As she was the only person in the section, he passed her by, wondering at the strangely absorbed expression of the marvelously beautiful face.

CHAPTER VI

OUTWITTED

The following evening Moses and Dinah met Onar at the little station and siding, called Stuart, after her plantation. As soon as they were started for home Onar asked; "Did you get that matter straightened out, Moses?"

"Not to suit me, Misse. Marster Weatherly done skivered what Mas'r Frank doin', an' 'bout de dog bitin' 'im, an' he gwine kill 'im, 'an he done bin gone to de lawyer an' dey fix it up somehow. Marster Weatherly and Mas'r Frank done bin ober to see you 'bout it, but you bin gone. Marster said fer to tell you, when yer come home, dat he like pow'ful well ter see you, if yer let 'im know."

"How did Mr. Frank act? Did he seem to be sorry, or was he angry?"

"Well, yer see de ole Marster had 'im pretty well in han', but he shuck his fis' at me when

Marster was talkin' to Dinah yere an' I lay he kill de dog yit, ef he git de chance. But Ole Marster right sorry, sho nuf."

"Have you heard anything about it from anyone else?"

"Not fer sho, Misse. Cose dey some talk 'mongst de po' white trash." Moses evidently did not wish to tell what he had heard.

"Tell me all about it, Moses."

"Well den, Sam went to de pos'-office las' night to see ef dey any wo'd f'om you, an' when he pass de saloon he hearn Mas'r Frank say, low like, jus' outside de do'; 'Onar's gone off an' now's a good time to clean 'em all up.' Den dey went in, an' whiles dey passin' fro de do' Sam listened at de do' an' he hearn dem talkin' low, but he couldn' skiver much dey sayin'; but he hearn so'thin' 'bout 'to-morrer night,' an' 'all masked.' Den dey lay to come out an' Sam run. Ef Sam hearn right dey low to mak us a call to-night, sho nuf."

"What were you going to do, Moses?"

"Well, Misse, we'as gwine ter fight fer de ole home twel de las' man fell."

After a moment of serious thought, Onar said; "I hope we shall not need to fight. Is your old musket in good condition for immediate use?"

"Yes, Misse, we's all armed. Since de affair down to de corners 'bout de votin', when dey all strung ole Josh up to de tree, we's been fittin' fer our turn. Now dey is fifteen ob us sixteen yeah old or ober, an' all on us hab good breach-loadin' rifles an' a hunderd roun' ob ammunition, an' ary one ob us can pop a squirrel out ob de highest tree, ef he can see his head. I low we put up a right smart of a fight, Misse."

"Well, Moses, I do not object to your having guns and ammunition, to use for the purpose of hunting; but it is an awful thing to shoot a man. It should never be done, except to save life, or in defense of a great cause: perhaps not even then. You may have Zephyr saddled for instant use, and I will be the general in this battle. Do not let a shot be fired unless I give the order. As soon as we get home and Zephyr is ready bring her into the wood-room at the rear of the house, and gather all the people into the servants' hall. Have the men bring arms and ammunition.

In half an hour the negroes were all assembled in the servants' hall, and Onar addressed them:

"Good evening to you all! I am sorry that trouble is threatening us, and I hope that it may prove to be not serious. Let every one do just as I tell him; and, if God wills, I will bring you

all safely out of it. Moses, bring up your trained warriors before me." She spoke with a radiant smile that lightened the heart and brow of every one except Moses. He felt a little hurt by the way in which she said, "trained warriors."

In a moment she was confronted by a company of fifteen able bodied men, well armed, and standing in a manner that would have done credit to any corporal in the army. Onar was surprised and pleased by the excellent training manifested; but she was also alarmed by it. It was a menace as well as a safeguard.

All the people gathered about, waiting.

Onar addressed the men: "My boys, you have been excellently drilled, and have shown yourselves to be teachable and obedient. Moses has been an excellent drill-master. But I am somewhat frightened to see a small army in my house. Uncle Samuel is a little jealous about having any of his nephews bearing arms, except by his permission and under his control. If some of your enemies should find out that you are armed and drilled in this fashion, they might use it against you; and, with the present bitter feeling against the colored people, you might be punished. I am proud of you all. Your father and grandfather, our faithful Moses, is a man to love and respect;

and you three sons of his are worthy of your father; and these eleven sons of you three are worthy of you. There is not one among you who would wrong any man. You have cared for me and for my property with judgement, kindness and prompt obedience; and I love you all. I believe that you stand before me in this orderly way more for my sake than for your own."

"Amen," said Moses, giving the salute to a superior.

"Amen," responded the whole line, saluting. It was a queer blending of the religious and the military.

"Is there anything that you would like to say, Moses?"

"Misse Onar, we know what yer say's true; so we'as kep' quiet about it. But sence dat fool—yo' pardon, Misse—laid holt ob you, we'as bin drillin' ebry minute; an'—an'—"

"It is best to tell me all, Moses. You know that I am not easily frightened," said Onar, encouragingly; but her face was pale and stern.

"Misse, Sam he been keepin' track, an' when de plantation han's am scattered, den he tack you. Oh, de villain! But if he scatter de plantation han's, he won't git you; fo' de whole worl' gwine ter know 'bout dat ar scatterin', fust."

Moses was in a ferment; and it was with a great deal of self-control that the men in the line remained quiet. That little company would have been a formidable foe for a company of regulars, just then.

A tear glistened in Onar's eye, and her lonely heart warmed toward these black brothers, the only brothers that she had ever known. She said:

"God bless you, Moses; God bless you all, for your true love. It warms my heart; and I love you in return."

There was quiet for a moment. The women were crying, and mammy Dinah sobbed aloud. The strong bosoms of these black heroes heaved heavily, and they bowed their heads before their queen. Onar held her handkerchief before her bowed face for a moment, and then, smiling, asked; "Is there anything farther, Moses?"

"No, dear Misse, only yer kin count on us to de las' bref ob de las' man"—"an' woman," piped in Dinah.

"Amen," sobbed the women; but they did not venture the military salute.

"It is getting late, and I must tell you my plans. I do not think Mr. Weatherly and his men know that I have returned. My intention

is to make all of these men prisoners. The only room that is strong enough for this purpose is the tower room. We must manage to get them into that."

"How yo' gwine do dat, Misse?" asked Moses.

"We cannot do more now than to form some general plan, and must leave the details to the moment. Seven of the men, with all of the arms, must lie in ambush in the room next to the tower room. The other eight men must be seen in response to the call of Weatherly and his men to come out. These eight men may go out a little way, and perhaps get into the fight a little; but they must not risk anything, nor get caught. Then they will retreat into the house, and appear to be shutting the invaders out. The invaders will follow, and our eight men will retreat to the tower room. When all are in that room, I and the seven men who are in ambush will appear in the door-way, the eight men will then rush quickly, as one man, out of the tower room, and we will bar the invaders in. This will be our general plan; when the time comes each man must use his best judgment to bring it about. What do you think of it, Moses?"

"We kin do it, Misse. Good!"

"Very well; pick out men to lie in ambush,

and men to lead the retreat. Dinah, take all the women and children to the room next to the tower room. Do not make any noise, and go in the dark. Rosa, you put out all the lights before you go up."

The women and children started at once.

"Moses, have you your men chosen?"

"Yes, Misse."

"Very well; let the men who are to lie in ambush go at once to the room next to the tower room, where the women and children are. Who leads the retreat, Moses?"

"I do, Misse."

"Very well. In order to prevent the invaders from suspecting that we are ready for them, these men had better go to their cabins; and, when called out, come up to the house. You have chosen the best men for this, have you, Moses? They should be fleet and strong."

"Yes, Misse. I can't run much; but I sleep in de house, so I's all right."

"It is now past midnight, and they will be coming soon, if they come at all. I will go up to the ambush."

She turned to go, but turned back, saying; "Moses, have you prepared Zephyr?"

"Yes, Misse. I done put 'er in de wood-room."

"We may not need her; but it is well to have her ready. You had better see that the doors are hooked, so that no one can get in there except from the kitchen."

Then she held out her hand to the old man, saying; "You have been a faithful friend, Moses, to our whole unfortunate race. God bless you! I do not feel any serious fears for the results of to-night's experiences."

Moses kissed her hand reverently, and turned to fasten the wood-room doors. Onar went at once to the room where the people were gathered. Here she found some confusion. She had the women and children sit down upon the floor at the farther side of the room, and placed the seven men with the arms near the door. Then she called one of the children, a bright boy of fourteen summers, to go with her. They went into the tower room from which a view of the grounds and of the surrounding country could be had. Here they took up their watch. After a few moments the boy whispered; "I see dem, Misse."

"Where?"

"Over thar beyond the cabins. They're comin' through de fields."

Sure enough, there they came, twenty-five strong. They were now just upon the cabins.

Onar carefully examined the heavy iron door of the tower room, took the great iron key from the inside and put it into the door on the outside, and swung the door wide open into the hall, the key being out of sight when the door stood open. She carefully moved the heavy bolt on the outside of the door and found it working easily. Her attention was called from this by an exclamation from the boy, and a subdued shout from without. Hastening to the window she saw that the battle had begun. The shout arose from one of her own men who had been summoned from the cabin to call out "Ole Mose." Onar and the boy raised one of the windows cautiously, and could then hear the conversation.

"We want ole Mose. Call him out!"

"He sleeps up in de big house, you kin find him up dar, I reckon. What you want wid ole Mose?"

"Shut up! We'll show you pretty soon. You call him up."

"Hi, Mose!" shouted the fellow.

"Hold your tongue, you nigger!" said one of the men, striking him a sharp blow with a whip that he carried. "Don't ye call out again or we'll use a rope on ye. Go up and tell him to come out. Mind yer eye now, and hold yer tongue!"

The negro did not reply, but started quickly toward the house. One by one the other men now came out of their cabins, putting on their jackets as they came, as if they had suddenly got out of their beds.

"Hi, Sam!" called one, "What's up?"

"You'll be up in a jiffy," called the leader of the gang, "unless yo' hol' yer tongue!"

"I guess a men can speak, if he wants to. This is a free country for honest folks," answered the negro. This brought the mob after him, and he quickly followed Sam to the house. The other five men had made a circuit to the house and joined Sam. Mose came out to meet them, saying; "What's the fuss, boys?"

"Those fellows want you," said Sam simply, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, and adding in a whisper; "They're a mighty strong lot."

Seeing the eight men together at the door of the big house, the mob stopped for consultation, and finally advanced to within a few feet of the door. Then their spokesman said; "We've come to thrash ole Mose. He's been a leetle too high and mighty 'round here fer some time, fer a nigger. We'll take him down a leetle, please!"

The mob laughed.

"Now if he comes out and takes his leetle

thrashin' like a man, and gives up that dog, we don't intend to tech anybody else; if he don't,—here's a rope fer him, and plenty of men to pull it fer more than one nigger. What d'ye say, Mose?"

"I say de day ob thrashin' niggers done passed an' yer won't thrash me' ner rope me jist yit. As fur de dog, dere's more'n one, an' dey is all handkerin' fer a bite at ye. Hear 'em?"

The dogs were certainly making themselves heard in a very expressive way.

"Look here, ole man," said the leader, pointing a pistol at him, "We have all got these little dogs, an' it don't take 'em long to settle big dogs or ole niggers. You better take yo' thrashin' peaceable."

All eight men went quickly into the house and shut the door.

"I tell yo' Weatherly, it aint quite safe breakin' into the house of an ole family like this, even to ketch a votin' nigger."

"The old family is all extinct, except Onar; and I will take care of her."

"I heard to-night that Onar came in on the evenin' train. I reckon she's in the house thar right now."

"Is she? So much the better! Look here!

we can do the whole job at once, and so avoid half the risk. The cave is ready, and there are horses in the barn, the fleetest in the country. Her Zephyr is here, if Onar is. Go on! I'll double the pay. Don't be afraid of one girl and a lot of niggers. Here, take some of this stuff!"

"Who's afraid?" said the man, taking the bottle, and making free use of its contents. "Yo' better git the horses ready fust."

"I'll send some men to attend to that. Go ahead!"

During this conversation, Moses had been out into the kitchen to make sure that Zephyr was in readiness, and secure. Huraldo was with her, and while Moses was occupied in tightening the saddle girth, the dog pushed through the door that stood ajar, and entered the kitchen unobserved. Moses returned and found him there. He was about to put him back with Zephyr, when Sam said; "Let him stay, dad. He's worth as much in a fight as two men, an' his life aint worth as much as one."

"But Misse sets such store by him, Sam."

"She would rather loose him than one of us."

"Yo'r right, Sam."

The knocking on the door had now become imperative, and Huraldo was waiting and quietly

growling, but fiercely licking his hugh jaws.

"Yere, boys, hold de dog while I open de do'. Dem cowards neber come in dis way," said Moses.

The boys held the dog, and Moses threw open the door, saying; "Here's ole Mose, an' dere de dog yer want. You'r twenty-five cowards to eight niggers an' one dog, an' yo' mask yer faces an' hang back lak pickaninnies at a spook."

Some of the mob cried; "There's the dog! Get the dog! Take Mose after! The dog! The dog!"

These cries were accompanied by a rush from behind, and the reluctant leaders were forced into the house, followed by the whole gang. To their surprise, the eight men did not show fight, but were intent upon getting the furious dog to a place of safety. The brave fellow had no intention of allowing the house to be invaded. This seeming cowardice of the negroes encouraged the invaders, who cried out; "Who's cowards? All niggers!" And they came pell-mell after the men and dog.

Huraldo had become dangerous even to his friends, and he would probably have done much damage, and finally been killed; but a low imperative whistle sounded through the hall. The

dog whined, gave up, and backing off, turned to obey the summons.

"Dog's afraid!" shouted one. "Come on!"

Moses and his men followed the dog, and the mob followed them, pushing and crowding up to the large tower room, into which the dog and thirty-two men rushed. They had no sooner entered than the low whistle again sounded, and the dog rushed out, every one making way for him, and every one crying, "Kill him!" The mob turned to follow, but drew back. The dog stood in the doorway, facing them, his seeming fear all gone, and looking invincible. Beside him, just inside the door, stood—a queen—an angel—a goddess—what? She stood upon a chair so that all could see her. She was dressed in white, wearing a beautiful golden circlet upon her head. She held in her right hand a naked sword. The spell was perfect, and before it had broken Moses and his men had slipped out, and the muzzles of seven rifles were thrust past Onar and were levelled at the mob. Three or four of the mob had also started for the door; but the dog, after allowing the eight men to pass out, had resolutely driven back every other, and now the rifles completed the intimidation. Just as the eighth man passed out Weatherly shouted;

"Shoot that dog, quick; and take the woman!"

"Take care what orders you give your men, Mr. Weatherly," said Onar.

Weatherly cowered at the sound of his name. He had trusted wholly to his disguise.

Onar immediately stepped down between Huraldo and the mob, and backed out the door with a beautiful courtesy. Eight strong men slammed the door, and twenty-five men from within fell against it and one another to thrust it open. If Onar's fingers had not been upon the bolt at the instant when the door touched the jam, it would have been forced open; but the bolt caught by the quarter of an inch, and was pounded in. The key was turned and the mob was in prison.

Onar slept until late on the following morning, then breakfasted; and, about ten o'clock, rode away toward the Weatherly farm. She found Mr. Weatherly at home, and was ushered into his private library.

"Mr. Weatherly, I have come on a very unpleasant errand. If I could do so, I would gladly spare your feelings; but, since you are the magistrate in authority over this region, I am compelled to come to you."

Mr. Weatherly moved uneasily in his chair, but answered with fatherly dignity; "Very well,

my child. I hope that nothing unpleasant has occurred; and that you are here before, rather than after, trouble. Tell me, and I will see to it that justice is done."

Onar was touched by the patient sorrow that showed plainly in the kind and noble face of this neighbor whom she had known and loved many years.

"Mr. Weatherly, it concerns your son. He came to my house one day and insulted me—"

"I did not know, Onar, that a woman was insulted when a man offered her his hand in honorable marriage."

"Indeed she is not! I believe that it is the highest honor a man can pay a woman; but I could not accept the offer, for reasons which I have no doubt you know, at least in part. When I kindly but firmly refused your son's offer, he became angry. He had been drinking. He barred my way, and refused to allow me to leave the room. Finally, he threatened that if I did not accept him then, he would take me by force. I tried every means at my disposal to get him to leave quietly, but I was finally compelled to ring. When Moses appeared, your son struck him. I told Moses to show him to the door. Then your son seized my wrist and said; 'Not till I have

had a good-night kiss, dear.' In an instant Huraldo had seized him."

Slowly Mr. Weatherly's head had sunk upon his breast, and finally into his hands. As Onar ceased speaking, he arose and walked to the window. After a moment he returned, and sat down composedly.

"I beg your pardon, Onar; he is my only son. Please proceed. I will be the magistrate now, and not the father. Frank told me something of this, but he told a different story. I understand about his seeking to kill your dog now. Your lawyer came to me about it, and we settled it. You were away from home, and I suppose you are not satisfied with the settlement. What do you wish?"

"Mr. Weatherly, I could wish my faithful Huraldo dead—yes, and myself too! for I am of no use in this world but to make trouble—if it would spare you the pain that your son's course is causing you."

She ceased speaking, controlling her emotion with a great effort. Then she proceeded: "A mob attacked my house last evening, with the avowed purpose of whipping Moses, killing my dog, dispersing my servants, and—and your son ordered one of the men to take me. By a little

strategy, being forewarned of the intention of your son, we enticed the mob into the tower room, and confined them there. They are there now."

"Is my son there?" asked the distressed father.

"Yes."

"How many are there?"

"Twenty-five."

"Twenty-five! All prisoners! Did any of them escape?"

"Not one."

"It is remarkable! What do you want done?"

"They must be punished, some of them to the extent of the law."

"Yes, yes, they must be punished! Come. I will go and have a conference with them."

"That will be quite useless, sir, unless you go with a force sufficient to guard them all. They are a desperate party, and as soon as the iron door is unbolted they would make a dash, and escape. You will need fifty men, at least, from the garrison."

Mr. Weatherly looked with surprise upon the slight, girlish figure before him, smiled sadly, and said; "If my son is there, he will obey me; and these men will hardly venture to defy the authority of the magistrate."

"Mr. Weatherly, your son will not obey you, in this case, at any rate; nor will this mob follow any one man quietly to jail."

Mr. Weatherly thought seriously a moment, and then said; "You are right. I will telegraph for men from the garrison."

"When can we expect the soldiers?"

"Sometime to-morrow."

"By your order I will keep the prisoners safe and feed them until the soldiers arrive."

"Do so."

"Good morning, Mr. Weatherly. I wish that these wrongs had never been done. Now that they are done, I hope that justice may be meted out as soon as possible."

"Good morning, Onar; I will use dispatch."

Onar rode away at once to consult her lawyer, who resided in the neighboring city, for the purpose of making arrangements for a visit to the special friend of her college days. This visit had been in her mind for some time, and the events of the past few days caused so great a longing to receive the sympathy of this, her only close friend, that the decision to go at once had been reached.

The lawyer informed Onar that her affairs were in a bad way, and very rapidly going from bad to

worse. But he furnished her with the necessary money.

As Onar received the check she remarked; "I do not understand how my affairs come to be in a bad way. You have had the sole management of them for many years, and it was a handsome property with which you began."

"You do not know anything about business," he replied. "The times have been hard, business has been depressed, and investments have not paid. I have been compelled to borrow money on the plantation in order to float certain investments until such a time as they shall become profitable. Now the man from whom I borrowed the money wants it, and we have no ready cash with which to pay him. Your freak in northern Michigan cost a great deal of money, and now your trip to Boston will cost more. This affair with Frank Weatherly is the most serious of all. Indeed, he is the man from whom the money on Stuart was borrowed, and he now insists that it be paid, or he will foreclose."

"I have trusted you fully with my business, sir, and I do not know anything about it. I have done wrongly in not posting myself upon these matters. I might have been of service to you. But I cannot understand how my hand-

some property has come into such a state as this. I have given you full power, it is true; but it would have been better if you had consulted me before you mortgaged Stuart. Cannot this money be secured somewhere else, and Mr. Weatherly be paid?"

"No, I have made every possible effort. It cannot be had. Of course, if there were a head at Stuart, it would be different; but people who have money do not care to invest it where there is no one to manage affairs, but an old nigger."

To this rather sarcastic and caustic remark Onar did not reply.

The lawyer continued; "If I might be permitted to advise in this matter, I would suggest, as I have done before, that you turn away that set of useless blacks, which has been a menace to Stuart ever since the war, and man your place properly."

"My people are free to go or to stay. I prefer to have them stay, and receive their wages. I am told, by those who ought to know, that mine is the best managed and most profitable plantation in this region of country. It would be very difficult to replace the efficient manager and his faithful and efficient helpers. Nothing less than the loss of Stuart will lead me to part with them.

Let us consider this matter forever settled."

"Very well. I fear it will not be long before the parting will be found necessary. I know of but one way, now, to save the place to your posterity. If I might be permitted to advise you upon that point—"

"You may not so presume, sir," said Onar, rising as she spoke.

The old lawyer looked at her, at first, with an amused and questioning smile; but as his cold soul finally comprehended her marvelous beauty and her queenly dignity, he discovered that she was no longer a child; but a woman of rare charm and of rare decision of character. He arose, saying; "I beg your pardon, if I have presumed to advise too freely. I assure you that it is only for your own good. But I see that you have grown to maturity sufficient to make my advise unnecessary in that direction, important as I feel my advice would be."

This last he added with downcast face, and with some embarrassment. And no wonder; for he was a schemer, both by nature and by years of practice. The blazing eyes of this pure-souled woman scorched him. He might for a moment be touched by her regal displeasure; but he was too hardened to be saved by it. His look of

admiration was followed quickly by a look of dogged determination, mingled with foxy cunning and with a touch of fear. These changes of countenance were slight and swift, but every change told its tale to the alert soul of the woman before him. Almost immediately he was again the imperturbable man of affairs. But he was five seconds too late in controlling himself. Onar had opened the door of his soul and looked in, before he had recovered from his surprise. She was not pleased with the furnishing and arrangement of his house, and he knew it. Whether she had discovered his counterfeiting room, he could not tell. But he knew that from now on he would not have everything his own way.

Before he had fairly recovered himself, Onar said; "Please return to me the papers I signed, giving you full power of attorney in my affairs."

"That would be a very foolish and unwise thing for me to do, and for you to require. Your affairs are just now in need of my experienced hand. No one else could understand them as I do, no one else could manage them so well. Moreover, when the old lawyer of your family died, he turned over to me this power of attorney, which he had received while he was yet a young man. When you came of age, I secured your signature

as a mere matter of form, but you have no power in the case. The person from whom I received this authority is dead, and it will remain with me until I delegate it to another."

When the old lawyer began to speak he had not intended to go so far; but the thought came to him as he spoke, that possibly this might be his best way to gain time. He even rather hoped that the bluff would work upon the defenceless girl. To his surprise, Onar stepped to the telephone, and called up a prominent man whose place of business was near at hand, requesting him to call immediately at the office of her lawyer where she would meet him. He said he would come at once. He was an old friend, and above reproach. When Onar went to the telephone, her lawyer, Kronkite by name, turned sharply to his desk; and when she returned to her seat he was busy with his papers.

In five minutes the gentleman whom Onar had called, entered the room. He greeted her with marked courtesy, and asked in what way he could serve her.

"For certain very good reasons, as I think, I do not wish Mr. Kronkite, here, longer to have the power of attorney in my affairs. I requested him to surrender to me the papers which give

him that power, and he refuses to do so. I simply wished to have a responsible witness to my demand that those papers be surrendered; and that H. A. Kronkite, my lawyer up to this time, with full power of attorney, shall not any longer act with such power. Have I stated my case clearly enough so that you can testify, if need be, to the fact that said power is taken from him?"

Onar ceased with a smile at her legal "said", and her friend replied, with a laugh; "I think you have stated the case clearly and concisely; and," laughing again, "legally. But, Kronkite, why do you refuse to be discharged? A man can hardly expect to choose his clients, and force them to accept his services, I should suppose. At least we cannot work that way in our line"

"There are some complications here, sir, that you do not understand; and I do not choose to explain them to you. This rather pert young Miss very evidently has some hard lessons yet to learn. You will both have to excuse me for the remainder of the afternoon, as I am very much engaged."

He turned around in his chair, and arose, saying, "Good day." He then sat down again to his desk, and was immediately busy with his papers. Onar and her friend did not think it

necessary to disturb him by saying good-by to the back of his head, and so they walked silently out of the office. Then the gentleman said; "I have been very suspicious of that fellow for a long time. I am afraid, my dear Miss Melbourne, that you will have trouble with him."

"I have not a doubt about it. Nevertheless, he shall not rob me of my patrimony without a hard fight. But I am only a girl, and do not know the first thing to do; while he has possession, and a long life of legal experience on his side; moreover, I believe that he is perfectly unscrupulous."

"I rather think your mother wit will help you out. You have certainly made the first move first, and with sufficient wisdom and decision. If he proceeds to any act of business now, without your consent, he will lay himself liable to the law. He will not dare to do so."

"I was just about to make a visit to my old classmate in Boston, but I fear to leave. Do you really think he will heed my discharge?"

"I certainly think he will. But you should have your business put into reliable hands as soon as possible. Do you know of any one with whom you would like to trust it? I should be very careful about giving any one the power of

attorney. You are quite competent to keep the run of things yourself."

"Whom would you recommend?"

"I do not know a man in the city whom I would like to recommend to you for so important and critical a post. Your property is large, if this scamp has not wasted or stolen it; and he is the shrewdest lawyer in the city, by far. There is not a man here who is a match for him; and he knows it."

Onar left her friend and went home. Long before she arrived there she heard a great commotion—shouting, screaming and pounding, as if the house were being torn down. Quickening her pace she soon galloped up the drive, and met Moses who was smiling, evidently much amused and yet somewhat frightened.

"What is all this noise about, Moses?"

"Lor' bress us, Misse, de prisoners trying to git out. Dey see you go 'way, an' dey think dey skeer de niggers twel dey let 'em out. Fust dey promise money an' such; den dey say dey kill us all, an' shoot an' yell; den dey say dey t'ar de house down, an' pound, like dat."

Moses paused as a tremendous pounding came from the strong room. Onar smiled at the story, and at the futility of the fury of the prisoners.

Onar Castle had been built after the analogy of this strong room. Escape by breaking out was impossible.

"Has any one escaped, Moses?" she asked, with a smile.

"No, Misse, how could dey?"

"Very well. Let them know that I have returned."

CHAPTER VII

VIVA AND TOM

It is not necessary to dwell upon the details of the next few days. Two or three things only need to be said. Mr. Weatherly offered to lend Onar the money with which to pay off the mortgage, in case Frank insisted upon foreclosure. This Onar declined with feelings of such genuine appreciation that Mr. Weatherly forgot for a moment the great pain in his heart. The soldiers came and the mob were taken to jail to await trial. It was now midwinter. The trial would not be held until spring. Ultimately they were imprisoned for a term of years. Bail was accepted for Weatherly, however, and he was allowed to go at large until the trial; and at the trial Kronkite somehow managed to get him out of trouble without even the odium that his part in the affair would naturally bring. The neighbors about Stuart, however, were thoroughly enraged.

It became evident to Onar upon the day that the mob were taken to jail that Kronkite was in sympathy with Weatherly, and that she must at any cost secure a lawyer who would be able to cope with these men. She commended her household to the care of Mr. Weatherly, as the legal magistrate of the district; cautioned Moses not to parade his well drilled little company, but to defend himself and the homestead; and hurried away to Boston.

If Onar's soul did not revel so much as usual in the land of dreams as she sped eastward, it was, nevertheless, exerting all its noblest powers to devise some means by which she could save "Ole Mose" and Dinah from being thrown out upon the world in their old age.

As she drew near to her destination, and the problem was not yet solved, one thought which had haunted the penumbra of her mind and had slowly and steadily advanced toward the centre of her consciousness, clothed in a well known sentence, now became glaringly prominent—"Wasted his substance with riotous living."

When this charge first thundered in her consciousness, she drew back in surprise and decided indignation. "Our property has for generations been intrusted to the care of lawyers, and they

have heretofore managed it with skill and integrity. When the last man of our branch of the royal house of Stuart passed away, and the property descended to us fated women, the house was left without a head. Our husbands have been noble men, but they have been drawn by the fate of our race into untimely disaster and into early graves. Pity the men who become entangled with the race of my great-grandmother, Onar! 'Wasted her substance with riotous living!' In what have I lived riotously?"

For a long time Onar thought deeply, and earnestly sought to learn why this charge had been made against her. At last she came out into clearer light. Her face grew gentle with sorrow, a slight flush of shame passed over it, her eyes that had caught the soft color of the sky from having lived so much in the upper clouds, sparkled with unshed tears as her soul whispered to itself; "To riot in the fairy-land of dreams may be as selfish and as ruinous to one's mission in life as to riot as did the Prodigal. God forgive me, and help me to retrieve the past!"

Boston was reached. In a moment Onar felt the sudden clasp of two warm arms about her neck, there were loving kisses upon her cheek and lips, and the familiar voice of the dearest

friend she had ever known whispered softly and rapturously; "My own sweet Onar! The old love comes back tumultuously! You are more beautiful than ever!"

In a few moments they were seated in a local train bound for Forest Hill. When they arrived at the station the Holmes sleigh was waiting for them, and they dashed merrily away, in and out among the hills of this delightful suburb, toward a beautiful villa less than a mile distant.

"Yonder is our house, Onar. I hope you will be happy with us. We are very happy."

"I am sure I ought to be happy in such a beautiful home, and with you, Viva. I have not a doubt that I shall be. Nevertheless I have some business which is not altogether pleasant, to which I must give attention. I shall take you into my confidence as soon as convenient for you, and perhaps you and your husband can help me to get it settled and off my mind."

"Don't you wait a minute to tell me, after we get our wraps off. You will feel so much better when it is off your mind: and I have not a doubt that Tom can help us."

"Oh for a husband like Tom," laughed Onar. "My kingdom for a husband like Tom!"

Viva slipped her soft little hand over Onar's

lips, saying; "You shall not make fun of me, Onar. And I think I can find you one very like Tom. I'll try dear."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Onar, in alarm. "Indeed, you must not! It would be awful! You know my history, Viva!"

"Your old superstition, I see. You live too much in the spirit world, Onar."

"Well, perhaps so; but really, Viva, tell me that you will shield me, not plot against me—promise me."

"So changeable, so fickle!" Then she added quickly, seeing the pain on Onar's face; "No, no, dear, you must not take me seriously any more than I did you. You shall not be worried, I promise you. Nevertheless, a very accomplished and fascinating man is coming to spend the winter with us. He will be here to-morrow. He is a younger brother of Tom. He is an author, and comes to meet some of the Boston literati, and to make use of our great library. I am sure you will like him; but you need not marry him, dear."

"Where is his home?" asked Onar quickly. Thomas Holmes had reminded her at once of the Holmes—Gerald Holmes—whom she had seen first through the shutter of Onar Castle.

"Very much interested, nevertheless," laughed

Viva. "He lives all over; but mostly in Boston and New York. He is just now returning from a western trip, where he writes us that he has found material for the most wonderful story that ever was written. Something about a beautiful girl, and a castle away off in the wild wood, and a whole lot of nonsense that I suppose he has dreamed out from a very small foundation of fact."

During this recital Onar's face was a study. There was interest, amusement, perplexity, vexation, and pleasure, all commingled in a glorious blending of light and shade and color. If Viva had been watching her closely, she must have discovered some more than usual commotion in Onar's mind. But she did not notice, and chattered on from one thing to another until Onar had fully regained her usual equipoise, and was ready for any emergency.

After noon on the following day, Viva came to her as she sat playing softly on the piano, and occasionally singing low snatches of song. Onar looked over her shoulder, but did not cease playing.

"I must go, in a few moments, to meet Tom's brother, Onar. Will you go too, or will you excuse me and amuse yourself until I return?"

Onar replied, as she played on; "I think it would be paying altogether too much attention to the young gentleman, that two women should meet him at the station, Viva; and I am in raptures just now with your splendid piano. Please let me stay."

"Very well. I shall be back in half an hour."

"Run off after your husband's brother, Viva, or you may miss him, and he would have to walk a mile in the cold snow. And if by chance he has frosted his feet this winter, the walk would be painful. Poor fellow!"

"Onar, Onar, what a veritable dreamer you are! Who would have thought of a young man's having frosted his feet, and making them tender. If he had met you, now, and you were speaking of his heart,—"

A storm struck the piano, and in the blast of wind, rain and thunder, Viva's laugh was lost as she clapped her hands over her ears, and hurried away.

The storm died as suddenly as it had arisen; and Onar mused on with a twinkle in her eye, and the shadow of a smile hovering about her mouth.

"He is really more of a man than Mr. Burndale, who wears my feather in his hat; but he is

rather lacking in Mr. Burndale's sense of propriety. I think I must meet him a little coolly. He should learn that it is not exactly the proper act for a young man to rummage a lady's house. Mr. Burndale had a better sense of propriety. Yes, I will be a little cool with Mr. Gerald Holmes."

Onar still sat at the piano, and was playing softly and dreamily, when she became aware of a presence in the room. She turned her head, and saw Viva leaning upon the arm of Gerald Holmes, and gently holding him back. Mr. Holmes, indeed, seemed rather eager to enter the room. Viva gave a little pull at the arm of the unsuspecting man, and braced herself in the attitude of one who pulls with might and main. It was a very expressive and a very pretty tableau, which only Onar and the mischief loving Viva saw. Viva winked saucily at Onar over Holmes' shoulder, and a person of less self-possession than Onar would certainly have lost her dignity. She, however, turned from the piano with perfect composure, and advanced quietly to meet Mr. Holmes. Viva, in spite of her love of mischief, presented him in excellent form to Miss Onar Melbourne, and so the meeting passed with suitable decorum.

"Miss Onar Melbourne." Holmes pronounced the name, bowing and looking with sharp interest at the lady. "It is always a pleasure to meet Viva's friends, and I certainly have heard her speak with unusual eloquence of a former schoolmate of hers bearing your name, at least the first name, which, indeed, I do not remember to have heard in but one other connection."

"I believe the name is not common," replied Onar. "It was my great-grandmother's name, and I have not known any one else who bore it."

"Where have you known the name, Gerald? I never heard of any other Onar, except mine."

"Why, that is the name of the castle about which I wrote you, and of the lady who built it."

Onar looked perfectly innocent as she said; "That is quite interesting, Mr. Holmes. Where is this castle?"

"Way off in the woods in northern Michigan. A crazy freak! And the worst of it is that my best friend has gone nearly mad for love of the insane woman who built it, if such a woman there be; and who, he says, is the most beautiful woman ever." Then Holmes added, half musingly; "If my friend goes quite mad, I shall find this rustic sylvan beauty and compel her to 'ride her white horse to Danbery Cross' where she will be out of

the way of my friends, with her rural artlessness." Then, arousing himself, and looking directly at Onar, he continued; "Please do not think my friend is so very simple, Miss Melbourne. The fact is that at the time of this rather strange meeting he was already in the incipient stages of a fever which nearly cost him his life. I assure you that he is not foolishly susceptible to the wiles of backwoods maidens. Indeed, he is rather fastidious in his tastes."

Onar had maintained throughout this discourse a courteous and unmoved exterior. One watching her closely would have seen, at first, the slightest wave of color sweep over her face; and, later, a little smile flit after the color, return and linger. But the laughter in her eyes!

When Holmes finished speaking, she remarked, smiling broadly; "It seems to me that your rustic beauty is not to blame. She evidently had taken herself as far as possible from the haunts of men. I certainly exonerate her from all blame in this matter. But how is your friend?"

"Burndale? Oh, he is well enough—in body, if not in mind.

"But—I think—You see, Miss Melbourne, his physician did not believe that Mark had ever seen a woman up there, and he attributed his

romance wholly to the hallucinations of the disease. But Mark had at least some foundation for his story. The castle is there."

"Burndale, did you say? Mark Burndale?" asked Onar in innocent interest.

"Yes."

"Do you know Mr. Burndale, Onar? I rather think he will be one of the characters in Gerald's new story."

"I am sure he will be the hero then, for I consider him a man of very fine nature."

"Where did you meet him, Onar? He lives in Michigan, and you live in Kentucky, and he has not traveled much toward the south, has he, Gerald?"

Holmes appeared a little surprised, but said; "Miss Melbourne can answer her question; and then I will answer mine, if that will be in order."

"I met him at my summer home, Viva."

"Where is that? How delightful! You never told me anything about that. Where is it?"

"That is a secret. I built it for a retreat from the wicked, prosaic world, a kind of nunnery; and too many have found it out already, Mr. Burndale, for one; but I think I can trust him, now that he is so infatuated with this rustic hussy." Onar feigned a little spite, and Holmes

wondered if Mark would not have stood a better chance with this Onar.

"Won't you tell me where it is, Onar?" asked Viva.

"O yes, I will tell you, if you will keep the secret. It is in Michigan."

"Aha, Minxie! Miss Melbourne evidently knows you."

"In Michigan! Why, that is where Mr. Burndale lives!"

Holmes laughed.

"But, Onar, Michigan is quite large."

"Quite. But Mr. Holmes has not answered his question."

"It is not necessary that Burndale should have traveled in Kentucky, Viva, for Miss Melbourne has traveled and, moreover, owns a summer home in Michigan."

Holmes was very much interested, but did not feel at liberty to ask the secret of the summer home.

Viva looked sharply at Onar a moment; but, whether she discovered anything in the dancing eyes or not, she suddenly fell into soliloquy: "Let me see. Yes! Beautiful and romantic girl, name of Onar, owns a summer home in Michigan. She knows one Mark Burndale.

Beautiful girl, name of Onar, owns a castle (romantic) in Michigan. SHE knows one Mark Burndale—”

Holmes became suddenly very much alive.

Viva paused impressively as Holmes changed his position, and then continued slowly without lifting her eyes; “Gerald, you had better put your feet on the register.”

“Why, Minxie, my feet are not cold!”

Then as a memory flashed over him, he looked in a startled way from one to the other of these wonderfully amused women, and asked; “Pray, what is the connection?”

Onar interpreted his questioning look, and said; “No, Mr. Holmes, there is no conspiracy between us. Viva is simply running the hazard of an awful guess. Her daring is simply wonderful. She is wholly in the dark, pretending to a certain degree of light, in the hope that she may startle you into the revelation of any unknown wonders.”

“I am too much in the dark to make any revelations. We must look to you, Miss Melbourne.”

“To me! To reveal the hidden movements of Viva’s rather agile mind! By what remarkable clairvoyance can I possibly learn the connection

in her mind between putting your feet on the register and a castle in northern Michigan?" Onar's musical laugh was a great relief to herself, and the others joined in heartily. "Please set me an easier task, Mr. Holmes. Viva must answer her own conundrum.

"I have forgotten the guessing of it, myself, just now. But I will tell you by and by."

"I thought so," laughed Onar.

There was a pause in the conversation, during which two of the trio were very thoughtful, and the third was watching their downcast faces with the utmost amusement. Holmes finally looked up and saw the expression of Onar's face before she had quite composed it into the puzzled look which would have been in keeping with the conundrum to be guessed. The look confirmed him in the conclusion that he owed her an apology.

"Miss Melbourne, if I have called you a rustic beauty, and such things, and have threatened to send you to Danbery Cross, it was because I did not know you, and I beg your pardon."

"And you think I answer well enough to the description so that you will venture the apology—an 'if I have done wrong I am sorry' apology, at that. But this shows a spirit of reconciliation, if not of penitence. As you have taken me to be

a representative of a class of women for whom I have a great respect, I shall assume the responsibility and show the good nature of the rustic beauties by accepting your apologies to them for your rudeness to the particular one who bears my name."

"Onar serves you just right," laughed Viva.

Holmes laughed also, and replied; "You are very gracious and very severe in the same breath, Miss Melbourne. And you leave me still in the dark."

"Pshaw! Gerald! You men are so obtuse! Let me introduce you to Miss Onar Melbourne, of Onar Castle, Michigan."

"Is it so, Miss. Melbourne?" asked Holmes, rising and advancing across the room toward Onar.

"It is only Viva's guess, Mr. Holmes," replied Onar, also rising. "But a woman's intuition prompted the guess, and you know what that means."

"Then I do most seriously beg your pardon!"

"Granted," said Onar, laughing; "But I don't consider that you said anything half so bad about me as you seem to think you did."

"There, Gerald, are your feet warm now?"

"Warm all over, thank you, Minxie."

The laugh was general, but Holmes was not yet wholly at his ease. He thought; "Could she have been there? Did she hear us speak of freezing our feet? And has she told Viva?"

They sat down again, and Viva sat by Onar, who gave her arm a little pinch as a rebuke and a warning not to say "cold feet" again.

"Oh, Onar, don't pinch me!"

"I hope I did not hurt you, dear; and perhaps it was not deserved."

"Yes it was. I told him."

"I have no doubt you told him many things."

"I told him what you said about freezing his feet."

"That was a very silly remark for me to have made. I suppose you have both heard the proverb; 'He that rideth with his brother's wife, is like unto him who walketh upon the snow with frost-bitten feet?'"

"No, I never!" exclaimed Viva.

"I do not remember to have heard it before, Miss Melbourne. Did you say it is in the book of Proverbs?"

"Such a statement would have convinced you at once that I am not a good Bible student, I am sure, Mr. Holmes; but it is a good proverb, nevertheless."

"But how is it true, I'd like to know, Onar?"

"Because the man is liable to be—if you are the brother's wife—in misery."

"There, Minx, you have your pay with good interest," laughed Holmes. Then he thought; "No, she was not there. The remark about feet was called out by the proverb—queer proverb—but pat—too pat. Could she have made it on the spur of the moment, as a blind? Impossible!"

"Tom's coming," cried Viva, and away she ran.

"Miss Melbourne, I am sure no excuse need be made for my brother's wife; she is the noblest little woman I know; but she is so full of her mischief—"

"No excuse whatever, Mr. Holmes. Your brother's wife is my dearest earthly friend," replied Onar, with a seriousness that somehow struck to Holmes' heart. He appreciated his brother's wife at her full value, and a high value at that; but that this women should claim her as her dearest earthly friend— He thought she deserved a kinsman, or a—

"Gerald!"

"Tom!"

The two brothers clasped hands cordially. They were splendid men, and fast friends.

"Good afternoon, Miss Melbourne. I have come up early on purpose to help you plan your great battle; and Gerald and Viva shall help us. Unless—I was thoughtless—you may prefer not to let Gerald into the secrets of your business. But I really do not know that there are any secrets."

"I do not think there are. The whole matter is summed up in this: I want a good lawyer, one who is expert and brave, keen and honest, and who will take hold of my business with all his heart. He will need to devote all his time to it for several weeks, perhaps months, to get my estate out of the snarl into which that great but unscrupulous lawyer, Kronkite, has thrown it."

"I know the man for you," said Gerald, promptly.

"Who?" chimed Tom and Viva. Onar looked toward him with interest.

"You are not a lawyer," added Viva instantly.

Tom put his hand over her mouth and his arm around her waist.

"Burndale?" asked Tom.

"Burndale might do. He is a faithful fellow. He would be faithful unto death, in this case, no doubt; but he has not quite calibre enough to cope with Kronkite, who is a villain whom it will

be exceedingly difficult to manipulate. I know him well."

"Germain! Is it Germain, Gerald? Strange I had not thought of him before."

"Germain and St. Bertrand," said Holmes.

"St. Bertrand is too much a dreamer, Gerald."

"You are right; but he is the largest man I know, Tom excepted, of course, Viva. St. Bertrand is a giant among pigmies, when he is among men; and Germain is the ballast that holds him down. Germain alone is a match for Kronkite; and St. Bertrand will reveal to him the hidden springs, when supernatural insight is required."

Afterward Gerald Holmes would have given half of his life to have unsaid these words, and taken back this introduction.

"You have paid these gentlemen a beautiful tribute," said Onar, "and if their services can be secured, I shall employ them. Where do they reside?"

"In Castleton, Michigan, where Mr. Burndale lives."

"I have great confidence in Mr. Burndale as a gentleman of fine instincts," said Onar, "but perhaps the firm of which you speak will be better fitted for this difficult task. I thank you very much for making them know to me. If you will

excuse me, I will go at once and write to them."

As soon as she had gone Viva asked; "How do you like her, Gerald?"

"See here, Minxie, you must be careful with your mischief. Miss Melbourne is worth studying, and you might put her to flight before any one of us had sufficiently collected our wits to study her rare nature."

"Oh, so you have seen fit to answer my question indirectly, I see. She has a rare nature, and you are afraid she may take flight before you can catch her, all of which is true. And it is especially for your advantage to remember that you never will catch her. I almost wish you might, but—for your own safety—don't try."

"Really, Viva, you take rather too much for granted. I admit Miss Melbourne's beauty, and that she is exceedingly quick and discerning, but I am hardly the man to be overwhelmed at first sight."

"Well, keep out of trouble," advised Viva, adding; "What do you know about her castle?"

Then Holmes told the part he had played in Burndale's affair. When he had finished Viva asked; "Do you think Onar was in the castle when you and Burndale were there?"

"I don't know. It seems impossible, after

our search. Yet I do not know how else to account for the key and the music and the fire in the furnace; but she could hardly have carried herself so innocently to-day if she had been there. When I found the lady to be Mark's Onar, after that expression about the freezing feet, I thought she had certainly heard out conversation. But that proverb—I—could she possibly have made it up in the course of our conversation, for the purpose of throwing us off the track?"

"Could she? My dear brother, there isn't anything that she couldn't do in a second, if she were brought to bay."

The conversation gradually turned into other channels, and presently Onar returned to the drawing room, and dinner was announced. The gentlemen went out to dinner in company, preceded by the ladies who, having fallen back into school-girl days, walked arm-in-arm.

"We are going to sit Quaker fashion, Tom; men on one side, women on t'other. I want Onar near me; and you and Gerald will become exclusive, I know, before dinner is over."

So the gentlemen sat vis-a-vis with the two ladies. But Viva was mistaken. The attraction across the table was unusually strong.

"We were talking about you just before you

came down, Onar. Gerald had been telling us about his visit to Onar Cas—”

“Ahem!”

“Why, Gerald, what a violent cold you are getting! What have I done now to make you cough so?”

“Nothing,” said Gerald, a little provoked, and somewhat confused. Even Tom was inclined to be a little annoyed by his wife’s mischievous sentence. He shot an arrow at her out of his sharp eyes. For one long second, not more, a heavy silence fell upon the little group. Onar’s merry laugh broke it, as she said; “Dear Viva, you are the only person I ever knew who would deliberately cause embarrassment. But they shall not ‘ahem,’ and shoot sharp looks at you—two great men to one poor little fun-loving women. Now, Mr. Holmes, will you come out of your pet, and make your confessions here; or shall I take you for trespass, and compel you to confess in court—”

—“ship?” added Viva, so quickly and in a voice so like Onar’s that for a second— Then she looked up calmly at Gerald, awaiting his answer, as if nothing out of the ordinary had been said.

Had they heard aright! Was it possible!

Then the audacity of it prevailed and they all laughed and laughed.

"O Viva, if you persist in being so wicked, I shall be compelled to go over to the side of the men, after all. Mr. Holmes, have you been trespassing on my castle grounds? I fear you did not have any means of getting inside the castle, and that your reception must have been rather cool."

"Miss Melbourne, the Minx deserves what she will not get. Her love of mischief amounts to an intoxication, as I have no doubt you well know. She really ought to be put in an asylum, but I cannot get Tom to consent to it. She knew better than to make that awful pun; but she could not resist. What name do you give to that kind of intoxication; or perhaps I had better say, mania?"

"I do not think Viva has the excuse suggested by the word 'mania', Gerald," remarked Tom.

"Mr. Holmes," said Onar, putting her hands in her lap, and looking steadily at him; "Have you been trespassing on my castle grounds?"

"Miss Melbourne," replied Gerald, assuming a like attitude, "now that we have come to direct questions, I will enter into a compact with you, if you agree. I promise to answer all your ques-

tions directly and truthfully, if you will answer all of mine in like manner."

"Agreed," said Onar so quickly that Holmes was thrown off his guard, and concluded that she did not have a secret in her soul.

"She was not there," thought he.

"Well, then, yes. I visited your castle in company with Mr. Burndale."

"Indeed! It is too bad that Mr. Burndale did not have his key."

"There lies the marvel. Mr. Burndale's key came to him from Heaven, while we were discussing the prospects of freezing."

"From Heaven!" exclaimed Viva.

Tom looked quizzically at his brother, and Onar said; "Tell us about it, Mr. Holmes."

"Well, there is not much to tell. We were afraid of freezing our feet, and were wondering whether or not it would be possible to get into the house, when we saw a large black plume falling from above. We picked up the plume and found Burndale's key fastened to it."

"Well!" exclaimed the ladies.

"Then, of course, you went in and made yourselves comfortable," said Onar.

"Yes," replied Holmes, uneasily.

"Did you find a good fire in the furnace?"

Holmes looked up in surprise, and replied; "That is the most remarkable part of all. There was an excellent fire in the furnace; but there was not a sign of life in or around the castle."

"Did you look in every room, Mr. Holmes?"

"In all but one," confessed Holmes, with considerable embarrassment. "The door of one room was locked."

"Exactly!" replied Onar. "If you could have gotten into that room you would probably have found a poor woman under the bed, frightened out of her wits. Indeed, it is too lonely for a woman to stay there alone."

"I think there was not any one in the house, Miss Melbourne. I made a plea, at the door of the closed room, to any person who might be within to make himself known. But there was no response. Burndale finally drove me out, saying that, if I knew the lady whose house I was rummaging, I would be ashamed; or something to that effect. He was right. I know her now, and I am ashamed. I beg your pardon."

"It is freely given, Mr. Holmes. You are not lacking in delicacy, I am sure. I can understand and appreciate the circumstances that led you on. I hope the poor woman was not frightened out of her wits, and I feel sure she was not."

"There was a curious coincidence upon my arrival here, which made me think that you were in the castle at the time of our visit. The proverb about the frozen feet is wonderfully suggestive of our experience before we entered the castle."

Then Gerald related at length the journey to the castle, the conversation about the freezing feet, and how the key came to their rescue. In conclusion he said; "Where do you suppose that key came from, Miss Melbourne?"

"From the woman in the house, of course; where else could it have come from?"

"Did she have the key?"

"Yes."

"But every window was fastened, and the iron shutters were closed. Besides, the key came down from above the trees. It could not have come down as it did, unless it had been thrown from the top of the house."

"Where were you standing when the key fell?"

"Under the window of the locked room."

"Exactly! That was very cleverly done! The woman probably heard your conversation, and knowing Mr. Burndale, by reputation, in sheer pity, she threw the key out to him through the skylight."

"Skylight! Is there a skylight?"

"Yes, over that room; and with excellent arrangements for manipulating it. You shall see it for yourself, if you will visit there, with Viva and your brother, next summer."

"Are we going there next summer, Viva?" asked Tom, "I had not heard of it before."

"Nor I, but it would be delightful!"

"I had not spoken of it because opportunity had not yet offered; but I very much wish you would spend the summer there. The air is the best, and the peculiar nature of the country is entrancing. Say you will accept my invitation."

"For Gerald's sake, Tom, say yes. He is not invited otherwise, and he must not miss the skylight."

"Yes, Viva, if you wish to, we will accept the invitation with our thanks. I cannot stay long, but I can spare you for as long as you can stay away from me."

"All right, sir, you shall repent that! Gerald, you shall see the skylight, and no doubt the skylarks, too."

So it was arranged. It was toward spring when Onar finally took her leave to meet Mr. Germain at Stuart. During the time of her stay with Viva, Gerald Holmes had been as faithful to his friend Burndale as the circumstances would

allow. That is to say, he had entirely lost his heart; and, although he had not the slightest encouragement from Onar, he was nevertheless determined that, if Burndale failed, he would venture everything to win her.

CHAPTER VIII

WHILE THEY DREAMED

February is giving place reluctantly to March. It is cold and stormy. At the window-panes, the sleet snaps, viciously, reminding one of the wolf at the door, in early days; and of the "wolf at the door" of many a home in these days. He sometimes gets in. He may get in here. But not to-night. Great logs lie on the dogs of the fireplace, and the red tongues lick lovingly around them, and wrap them in warm embraces—in hot embraces that burn them, finally to the heart, and consume them.

The burning logs throw a changing light throughout the room. The shadows chase each other in a merry game of hide-and-go-seek from corner to corner, under old-fashioned chairs and tables, up the walls and over the ceiling of oak and down again, snatching kisses from a fair maiden's cheek and bending the plume of a noble

knight, bedecked in the blazonry of ancient days.

"Ah, we've found you, we've found you!" the shadows cried, as they danced and danced over a fair form, bowed low in the chimney seat. What is this? A statue? A shadow? A painting? Hush, no! A sigh breathes from it. The shadows flit noiselessly away, ashamed of their frolic.

It is mid-night. The evening has been spent here in Onar's ancestral hall in company with Germain, studying over the condition of the fortunes of Stuart. Germain has gone to his room for the night; and Onar is listening to the sound of the voice of the accusing angel, who says only one sentence over and over; "Wasted his substance with riotous living."

At last Onar rises wearily to her feet. She looks worn and pale in the firelight. She walks unsteadily across the hall, and stands humbly, with her hands clasped behind her, before the portrait of the plumed knight.

"Sir Knight," she said, "the fortune you left to our line I have wasted with riotous living in the dream-land of my foolish phantasy. While I have been dreaming the patrimony you left us has been stolen. I am sorry, Sir Knight. I am not so sorry, however, on your account, as because I have been unfaithful as God's servant.

How cold you look in your gauntlets and mail and helmet of steel. That frown ill becomes your handsome face. Cannot you forgive? God is more merciful. I will go to Him."

She turned and knelt at an oaken settee. Her face is uplifted, and the firelight flits over it and caresses her hair. Her features are mobile, soft and sweet with the unrelieved sorrow of unshed tears.

Long she knelt thus, with lips parted a little, and with open eyes uplifted to the Heaven that is seen as easily through walls as through the air and ether—long she knelt in prayer. Once only words were heard: "O God, our Father-God, forgive; and help me to retrieve the wasted past."

Meantime, in one of the spacious and beautiful chambers of Stuart, Guy Germain paced the floor with noiseless tread until the dawn streaked the east. He has been for many days seeking to unravel the tangled skein of Onar's fortunes. With almost magic skill, he has discovered that the property is intact, and that it has been so well handled that it has nearly quadrupled during the lifetime of the present heir. But this property that Kronkite has had in trust for Onar, has been so expertly entangled with that of Frank Weatherly that a separation seems impossible.

It has become evident that this work has been going on for several years. Weatherly, well assured that Onar would not marry him for his own sake, has been persistently weaving his own property and hers together in such a manner that she would be wholly in his power, in her fortunes, if not in her person. Kronkite, too sharp to become personally involved by holding any of her property, has received large remuneration from Weatherly for his services. Conjointly they have secured all her property to Frank Weatherly; and, in turn, half of the amount has been converted into cash and transferred in fees to Kronkite. All this Germain succeeded in finding out; but the way to right the wrong was not, even with difficulty, discovered. Kronkite had used his power in conformity with all the outward forms of law. The only point at which he could possibly be touched was with reference to the disposal of certain papers which Onar said she had personally witnessed. Kronkite declared that such papers were not in existence, and never had been. The only hope was to find these papers; but that was a forlorn hope. They had probably been destroyed. If not, they were in safe keeping, and would be destroyed rather than given up, if danger of discovery should threaten.

In the heat of his indignation, Germain had paced the floor during the hours through which Onar had thought and prayed in her ancestral hall. As the day broke over the eastern hills, Germain spoke aloud: "A more deliberate and skilful villain than Kronkite is not unhung. If Miss Melbourne is mistaken about those papers, there is no redress know to the law. I might as well go home. It is a shame! I wish I could do something for her. She is a marvelous woman. No wonder Burndale went raving over her. How calm she kept when I told her the result of my investigations! Not a word, nor a tear, nor even a sigh. I expected a scene. But she is so full of her spiritual life! I doubt if she can cook! What a mate for St. Bertrand! But they would sit dreaming of the regions of the immortals until they both arrived at the said regions. Poor St. Bertrand, he needs a very practical kind of help-meet. Foolish girl! If she had attended to her business a little instead of building a castle in the woods in which to dream away her precious life, she might have been worth the best part of a million dollars to-day. As it is, she is a pauper. The mortgage on Stuart has been purposely made so large that the security is not sufficient. Money enough to take

up the mortgage cannot be borrowed on the place. Old Squire Weatherly will loan it; but Miss Melbourne will not permit that. Weatherly will not make any trouble for the present, however; and Miss Melbourne need not know that she is actually dependent upon him.

"What shall I do with St. Bertrand? He is the most talented man I know. But so visionary! The way in which he picked up that murder case was simply marvelous. He shut his eyes and saw the whole thing. For the life of me, I can not see, to this day, how he found out what he knew. But he spends his money before he earns it, always sure that he is just about to earn more; and his credit is gone, even so soon. I shall have to cut loose from him in the course of a few months, if this thing goes on. But I love the dear fellow!

"Well, I'll go to bed, and let the world go to smash, if it wants to so bad."

The following afternoon Onar and Germain met at a late dinner. The conversation, as had been usual during the time of Germain's work there and in the neighboring city, was confined to the business in hand.

"You think, then, that you cannot accomplish anything more at present?" There was a scarcely

suppressed note of distress in the voice.

"I think not, Miss Melbourne. Every thing hangs upon the discovery of those papers."

"And you think they cannot be found?"

"I fear they cannot."

"Mr. Germain, would it not be possible for me to sell Stuart, with the exception of the house and a few acres of land, and pay this mortgage?"

"That might be possible, Miss Melbourne, if you could find a purchaser, or several purchasers. You might divide your plantation into small farms, and so sell to good advantage, perhaps. But I doubt if you could save much of the land."

"One acre, free from debt, would be better than all of it, mortgaged."

"Nevertheless, Miss Melbourne, it is all yours, by right. I would advise you not to make any such move at present. If you sell the land, and pay the mortgage, then the villains have their money, and you may not be able to get it back; but, if we should yet discover a hold upon them, you will have your own, for it is here and they cannot dispose of it in any such manner as to make it impossible for you to regain possession."

"Very well, then I will let matters rest for the present; and in the mean time I will make the plantation pay from every fence corner of the

square mile."

"You will take a vacation at Onar Castle?"

"Yes, I have friends invited and cannot fail them. It is not expensive living there. I think that I can manage for one more summer."

"I shall hope to see you when you go through Castleton; and we have had some thought of taking a short vacation in the regions made so famous by Burndale's experience last summer. If so, perhaps we may see you as Burndale saw you, when he took you for a heavenly vision."

"I do not know Mr. Burndale's experiences from his centre of consciousness, I am sure. I understand that he was in the first stages of a serious fever, and so I can retain a good opinion of his soundness, even though he may have been so erroneously impressed at our chance meeting," replied Onar, with quiet dignity.

"Undoubtedly the fever had something to do with it," answered Germain, slightly annoyed by the chill that his words had caused.

"As you are a man seemingly not given to fevers, I should be pleased to have you call at Onar Castle; and I have no fear that you would mistake me for what I am not."

"I shall certainly accept your invitation, if we go up there, as we have been talking of doing."

Not long after this, Germain went home. The day following his departure Onar called Moses into a room that she had fitted up for a kind of business office; and here for an hour each day Onar planned her farming with Moses. She saw to it that everything was in readiness so that with the first suitable day of spring the farm work started in full swing. She, Zephyr and Huraldo haunted the fields of Stuart. Her presence was an inspiration to her men, who loved her as their queen and benefactress. The careworn look gave place to her wonted expression of peace and happiness. But the eyes that had looked far, far away, a year ago, were learning to see things at hand. Hours that had been spent in aimless wandering about the country, on horseback or on foot, for the pleasure of her own fancies, were now spent in earnest care for the welfare of her people. She found that the younger members of her little colony were growing up in ignorance. She taught them herself. But her voice was as soft and sweet as when first we heard her speak. Perhaps it had a little clearer resonance, as though the instrument were in better tune. There was greater bodily vigor than she had ever known, even strong as she was in her battle with the storm on Onar Lake. She was a specimen of a

woman physically perfect. Her face was not at all sunburned, nor was her beautiful complexion destroyed. The casual observer would scarcely notice any change from a year ago; but her ever radiant beauty was toned up by a lofty purpose, which is always a better tonic than a lofty dream.

The office door of Germain and St. Bertrand burst open one wild day in March as if the gusty old month were bound to find refuge from himself in that cosy place. But, no, it was Germain who, tearing himself from the grasp of old March, rushed in.

"Hello, my Saint! where drivest thou thy chariot to-day? Which province of the spirit world is honored by thy presence this windy morning? Arise, thou laggard, and greet thy returning pard."

St. Bertrand did not remove his feet from the table; but he smiled pleasantly and extended his hand, saying; "Welcome home. You are badly needed."

"For what and by whom?"

"For everything and by everybody. I have tried in vain to make people understand that I am IT as much as you. They don't comprehend me, somehow. They call and cry; and then go

out saying that they must wait until you return. Did not I win the murder case? And did not I get the wrongs of widow B—righted when even you had given up her case as hopeless? Tell me why they all cry for you, like babies for Castoria.”

“My dear boy, it is because I am equal to a petty case, like that of a rod of line fence or a stolen pig. They would not insult you by saying fence or pig to you. If it were murder, or a young widow to be defended, they would want you. You are too big for a petti-fogger.”

“Thank you. I presume you are right; you usually are. But the petti-fogger gets the money and the success, and I get—lean. But how did you succeed with your Kentucky client? Is she really a dream?”

“Why, what do you mean? A dream! She is certainly a dreamer.”

“Guy, Guy! Have you forgotten all your Greek? Bring out your Liddell and Scott and see what ‘Onar’ means. You are too prosaic, old man. I presume you cannot even tell the color of the eyes of this goddess of dreams. Come now!”

“I did not go down there to look into the eyes of my client; but into her fortune.”

“Ah, well, you are mercenary. I should have

looked into her eyes and not into her fortune; and there I should have beheld tears, all on account of my neglect of duty. I have no doubt you left the lady all smiles and rejoicing."

"Well, no, my boy, I can't say that I did. In all seriousness, John, the lady's fortunes are in a tangle that it is beyond my power to straighten out. Indeed, I do not see how any one can straighten them out until certain papers are found, which I have all reason to believe that Kronkite has destroyed. Onar Melbourne is absolutely without property; and when the villain who now holds the mortgage on Stuart forecloses, she will be in debt with no means of a livelihood."

"Poor girl! She is to be pitied, and I know how to pity her. See what I just received:—"

John St. Bertrand,
Castleton, Mich.,

Dear Sir:—

We very much need the money on the note we hold against you. In your last letter you promised to pay soon. Now if you can't pay all of it we will feel grateful for any part of it even 1-4 would help us out. We shall expect a payment to be made on the note within 30 days. If we do not get something besides promises we shall place the account in the hands of an attorney.

"Well, old man, who is to blame?"

"Blame! Don't stop on blame! If you knew how I incriminate myself, you would pity me, Guy! I wear sackcloth and ashes day and night. I, a young man whom every one praised for his talents, am old in debt and in disgrace! My honor is gone, my self-respect is gone, and if I were as selfish as some people seem to think, I would soon be gone too."

St. Bertrand had arisen, and was pacing back and forth with a long nervous tread, his fine dark face clouded with shame and remorse, and illumined from within by a fierce fire of self-anger which compelled the pity rather than the blame of his companion.

"John, I pity you! You suffer more than any of your creditors. I wish I could help you; but I have my own load to carry just now. I hope that, sometime, I can help you. But, keep courage, man! You can't do anything when you are in such a state of self-condemnation. You only add injury to your creditors when you so unfit yourself for duty. Cheer up, old man! you will get out all right. You are hardly started yet."

"Thank you, Guy, you are a prop. What you say is true; but I shall dream of those letters, and awake with them upon my mind and heart

and conscience. Here is another after the same order of condemnation. Little these people know how willingly I would pay them, and how impossible it is for me to do so."

Dear Sir:—

I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know that we are all as well as usual, hoping that this will find you the same. I would like to know if you was agoing to pay that note of —'s when due I would like to have you pay it I know that you can pay that any time in one month and not cramp yourself atall with the wages that you can command I am hard up and nothing to sell only a little wheat and that dont fetch any price atall and have big payments to make and instid of me paying your debts you are more able to help me pay mine and after I have cared that note of yours three years and only fifty dollars when you can comand a thousin Dollars a year without any Invested when I cant do more with all I have invested so I think I have cared it long enuff and If I was you I would not ask it

right and let me no soon

M—N—

"Look at the letter! It is a humiliation that I, the man of letters, should owe a man so illiterate, and not be able to pay him."

"I should think so! What was this note for?"

"Borrowed money. He signed the note with me from simple kindness of heart to help me out of a financial straight. I tell you, Guy, it takes all the moral courage out of a man to feel that it was ever in him to get into such a condition.

"Well, here is one more that you may see. It is a glimpse of life that you ought to have. Be thankful that you need not experience it!"

Dear Sir:—

I am requested by my father to write you, reminding you that over a year has gone by since hearing from you in regard to the note for the money my dead brother so WILLINGLY and TRUSTFULLY lent you. It can't be possible you have no conscience about the matter? If we don't hear from you soon and settle the matter fully we shall take heroic means to collect it, for it has gone far enough.

Respectfnlly,

"That dear fellow lent me this money while I was in college. If he were alive he would never harrass me; but he is gone and his friends want the money. Well, they ought to have it."

St. Bertrand took two or three turns across the room, and then sat down with a heavy sigh.

"Well, Guy, can I do anything to help you?"

If so, I must do it soon; for I am going to leave you. Our partnership is ended."

"What do you mean, John?"

"Just that. Since you have been gone I have learned a few things; and one of them is that I am in your way, or shall be very soon. A lawyer who expects honorable practise must be a man of unimpeachable soundness, not only in principle and in advice, but in his own business affairs, as well. You are all right, but I am all wrong; and I will not allow your prospects to be injured by association with me. So let me be of help, if possible, soon."

"John, you are too honest of heart, and far too discerning to be deceived. I also have thought of this; but let me do this much for you: stay with me. I can help you more than you will hinder me; and you can retrieve yourself in time. Do not deny me this privilege. If you will let me help hold you down to business, and help you to keep your money, and to dispense it properly, I can help you out."

"Thanks, awfully! No," and he arose and went over to his friend with extended hand, "no Guy, excuse that 'awfully.' No doubt I need just such a manager; but, you see, strange as it may seem, with all my humility and remorse,

I still cannot bring myself to the point of giving up the management of my own affairs. Must I so soon surrender what little manhood I have?"

"I did not mean so much as that, John. I said more than I would have you do. I would not be intrusive, but would like to help you when you want me to. But, I see; you want to work out your destiny alone. You are fully as proud as you are humble. Yet, stay on a while; until fall at least. Will you?"

To this St. Bertrand finally consented. When the matter had been satisfactorily settled, they took up the problem of Onar's fortunes. They went carefully over the whole case. St. Bertrand became very much interested, especially in the description of Stuart and its mistress.

"What a pity that this last heiress of a dying race should be turned out into a cold and cruel world! Is she as beautiful as Burndale's ravings would indicate?"

"Yes. She is the most beautiful woman that I ever saw. But, you see, she has been visionary all her life; and has left all her business to her lawyer. If she had lived a little more on the earth, and less in the clouds, she would be worth the larger part of a million dollars now."

"So much as that! Kronkite and Weatherly

must have feathered their nests with down."

"So they have done; and Weatherly evidently intends to take the plucked bird to the nest that he has made soft with her feathers. The last grand sweep was evidently made for the purpose of compelling a reluctant consent from our Miss Melbourne to marry Weatherly."

"Indeed! The contemptable villain! Will she consent to this?"

"Never!"

"Not if she could see the way to save the hall of her ancestors from profanation, and to save her poor blacks from suffering, and herself from poverty?"

"No, never!"

"Does she love herself so much more than all others that she would not give her body for them? Is she so selfish, Guy!"

"No, she would die to save her poor blacks a home; but she would not marry a man she did not love to do it. I do not very clearly make out the distinction; but that is evidently her position although no word ever passed between us on the subject. My conscience! she could tough it out for a few years with a rather uncongenial man, for the sake of keeping her old place, and being rich all her life! I rather think money can do

more to make one happy than a congenial husband can. Of course, according to sentiment, love in a cottage is very pretty; but in life, more money and less love, if necessary, seems to bring full as much happiness."

"You have shown me the soul of a WOMAN! I wish I might meet her. I am afraid, old man, that, if you do not understand this choice of death or of suffering for herself and for her people to such a marriage, you are lacking in the highest moral perception. Why, Guy, how could a real woman think differently!"

"There, come down! You are just like her. You are as fine strung as the angels, both of you. I am afraid you are both doomed to have hard times in this mortal body. Your day begins when you get free. I fear this coarse dog must take his day now."

"Tut, tut! you are all wrong. What fault have you to find with this body, man?"

St. Bertrand stood before his friend, almost six feet in height, and in proportions to charm the lover of the human form. He stood straight as an arrow, every nerve thrilling with noble life.

"This body is glorious! It is a temple fit for something more glorious than an angel; it is fit for the soul of a man; it is fit for the soul of a

man in whom is the spirit of God. And I imagine the nature of the day that you begin when you leave this body is determined by the way you have lived this day."

But the noble face that was lit up as by heavenly fires within, clouded. St. Bertrand sank into his chair, exclaiming: "After all, a safer attitude is that of kneeling. What hope for us, what hope for me, if mercy should be withheld!"

"Well, well, my boy, you are a conundrum! I have a glimmering sense of what you mean, in both attitudes; and I guess you are right, in both. John, my boy, you are VERY MUCH a man—a very large man! No one can harness you. Is there a harness that will fit and be strong enough? If so, you ought to find it, and buckle it on, and pull."

The two men arose and clasped hands, each with a hand upon the shoulder of the other. They stood a moment looking into each other's faces with that expression of deep affection that so seldom, in this day, lights the faces of two men as they stand thus. Then St. Bertrand said: "Guy, you think me an elephant. I think I am a giraffe, though on your hands, an elephant. The harness need not be so large, nor strong;

but of outlandish proportions. I could wish I were a solid plow horse. Here is the evening mail."

They turned to receive it. There was a letter for St. Bertrand from the same M— N— whose former letter Germain had just read. St. Bertrand read it in silence, and re-read it; then he groaned in bitterness of spirit; then he laughed; then he groaned again, as he handed it to Germain.

CHAPTER IX

A FRUITFUL SUMMER

March reluctantly gave place to the summer months. The spring had been a beautiful one, but to St. Bertrand, whose soul was usually all alive to the delightful changes of the season, it had been a time of unusual depression. During these months the giant Despair was struggling to destroy his life. He received many very hard letters, to which the poor man made such replies as he could. In a few cases he succeeded in borrowing a little money with which to pay some of the most pressing claims; and then these notes came due and were a continual source of embarrassment.

The interested student of character will ask how so bright a young man got into such a way. Many a college boy could answer, if he would. But the case of St. Bertrand was different from that of most college boys. He was free from bad

habits. He did not even smoke. But he had always been an enthusiast in religion; and, as strange as it may appear, this enthusiasm was what first started him in the direction that is proving to be so ruinous. Perhaps, however, it would be a truer statement to say that this enthusiasm was made the excuse for contracting a debt for the purpose of enabling him to carry on, in connection with his work in college, certain religious work in which he was interested. He perhaps gave himself credit for too much philanthropy and for too little selfishness. He perhaps wanted to follow his own pleasure fully as much as he wanted to do good; but we must give our hero credit for so much of worthy motive as he had. Young men are usually blind to their real motives.

That which proved to be his greatest enemy, was the happy optimism that always heard the watchman on the walls of life crying, "All's well! All's well!" St. Bertrand would be saying: "There is money enough at the top for us all, and I shall be able to climb up and get some of it as soon as I am out of school. If we do not live as life comes, we shall lose just so much of it."

But his notes came due before graduation.

He got them extended. They came due again, and he renewed them again with the interest added. When they came due again he borrowed money enough and a little more, elsewhere, to pay them and the interest, and a little on his board bill. He was earning a little by work done out of school hours; but his wants were many, though all of them were of a nature refined and ennobling; but, well, well, set a snowball to rolling and it soon becomes large, and by the time it is too heavy to roll farther, you have got it to the verge of a decline down which it rolls by the force of its own weight, while he who must roll it back up the hill throws up his hands in dismay at the rapid increase in size as over and over it goes.

Interest added to principal! St. Bertrand was proud and courageous; he paid compound interest on many notes; but he borrowed of some one else in order to do it. The amount that he owed at the beginning of this eventful summer was not large; but he owed it to a score or more of persons. Every one thought the amount was so small that he could pay if he were disposed to do so. Nobody knew that a score or more of other creditors thought the same thing. He found himself trying to work up a practice

and to inspire confidence in his ability and good judgment, in the face of these creditors whose letters were evidence of his inability to manage his own affairs. People began to look askance at him, or he thought they did. They passed by, shaking their heads, and saying; "Smart fellow, but—wrong somewhere."

To St. Bertrand his honor was as the apple of his eye. He was as sensitive as men of his nature usually are. No words of condemnation and rebuke spoken by another ever hurt him so much as the scourging which he invariably gave himself after the other had exhausted himself in reprimand. A year out of college, and the happy optimism that heard, "All's well," in day-dreams and in dreams of the night, has given place to a quivering self-distrust which hears, in day-dreams, the creditor's demand; and in the dreams of the night groans under the nightmare of the grinning demon of debt.

Germain has done all that one man can do for another to keep his friend from brooding over this sad condition of things. But the merry railery with which he has often spurred the heart-sick man to activity and jocose reply, has, of late, elicited no response. Finally, a little earlier than he had intended, he determined to

break away for his summer vacation; and to claim St. Bertrand for his companion. So it came about that he entered the office in his usual breezy way one sultry afternoon, with the intention of communicating his determination, and found his partner in the depths.

"Heigh-ho! What is the matter with the Saint now?" said he as he noticed the dejected attitude of his friend.

St. Bertrand replied, pointing to an open letter: "Please, Germain, I shall have to ask you to drop the old nick-name; for it has come to hurt me."

Germain picked up the letter and read it. It was like many others that St. Bertrand had let him read. He returned it, saying; "Well, my boy, he is after you, isn't he? But, after all, it is not so bad. He is kind enough not to bring public action against you, and he will not even enter the judgement against you at present. It is a kind letter, on the whole. I think that he is simply trying to find out whether or not you can pay. Can't you send him some small amount?"

"I haven't a dollar to my name!"

"Well, let me take your acknowledgement. Then you can send the judgment back—if that is what you think best to do."

"It is all I can do, under the circumstances."

The judgment was duly signed and acknowledged, and then deposited in the mail.

"See here, old boy, I have something more pleasant to propose. To-morrow this shop shuts up for four or six weeks, as the case may require, and the two partners are off for the regions made famous by the Onar of Burndale's dreams. At least one of the partners is off for those regions, and I sincerely hope the other will not refuse the pleasure of his company. Now, wait a moment before you reply. I am in constant correspondence with Miss Melbourne, and she writes me that she is already there, with certain friends from Boston. She wishes to consult further with me concerning her affairs; and expressly asks me concerning my partner—stay, I will read her very words: '——I know that you are a man of too good judgment to think that I am at all dissatisfied with your efforts, when I enquire why your partner has not taken any interest in these matters. I know that you have done all that you could do, and perhaps all that any man can do; but you remember that two heads are better than one. I have also heard some very favorable reports of Mr. St. Bertrand's ability in handling obscure cases.

And, indeed, for that particular kind of cases, the gentleman who referred me to your firm, spoke more highly of your partner than of you. One sentence in particular I remember well: 'Germain alone is a match for Kronkite; and St. Bertrand will show him the hidden springs when supernatural insight is required.' We have now come to the necessity for discovering the hidden springs, and consequently for the appearance upon the scene of the gypsy-medium, or seer, St. Bertrand. Perhaps I ought not to have written this last. Please do not let the gentleman think me lacking in decorum. I am a little embarrassed for fear you will think I do not appreciate your services, which is not true.

'It is now vacation time. I am here with friends from Boston, and—I am sorry that my castle is full—we should enjoy your presence in our vicinity, for the pleasure of it, as well as for the business convenience.'

"What do you think of that, young man? Is that an antidote for the letter just disposed of?"

"That warms a fellow up some, old man. But then, again, it emphasizes the giraffe proportions. It certainly greatly quickens an already fervent desire to become acquainted with our—your fair client. I have not given her case any thought."

"'Our' is all right. Does she not gently remind me that I have left you out of the case too long already?"

"All the better; but it was my work, not yours. What do you propose to do?"

"Make amends by going with you to the regions of the Jack Pine to-morrow."

"I can't go, Germain."

"Why not?"

"You do not need to ask. I have not the money. Of course you would supply that. But what would my creditors think when they hear that I can get hold of the money to go off for a month's outing in the woods? I am a slave!"

"No, you are not. You are not permitted to sell yourself body and soul to your creditors, especially not when to do so is only to wrong them the more. It may be your duty sometimes to do what is best for them and yourself, even though to them it may seem that you are using their money for your own comfort. Above all things, St. Bertrand, don't get morbid. YOU are worth more than a million times what you OWE! You must not perish, if you never pay a dollar of what you owe. Am I right?"

"I suppose you are, at least in part. But I am not worth much as I now am, and if I had

been of much value in the beginning I would not have made such a blunder of life. So, while I appreciate the value of a man, I am not of much value. The world is full of men. One such as I am may perish in sight of them all and no few of them think it worth while to rescue him. To the man who is going down—Ah! All is going! To the men who look on, one man is perishing.”

“That is morbid.”

“By the powers, Germain, the load is heavy, too continuously!”

The noble head went down upon the desk, and for a moment the strong man writhed under the lash of the debt demon. Germain looked on in a kind of wonder. He might have been in the place of his friend, and not have suffered so. He knew this, and he was ashamed of himself, and proud of St. Bertrand. He went across to him and placed a hand on the bowed shoulder, saying; “You teach me, anew, what is the soul of honor. Now promise to go with me to-morrow.”

“What was it Miss Melbourne called me, a squaw?”

“No, a gipsy.”

“Oh!”

Then they laughed and St. Bertrand felt better.

“If you feel equal to the task of taking care of

me, I will go. But I would not undertake it."

Settled, on any terms. Now be off and get ready for a month's stay, at least."

It was the second day after this, as Germain was watching the sunset from the summit of a hermit rock—the only rock for miles around—watching and thinking as he watched, when his friend burst from the vale behind him with this startling exclamation: "I have seen her, old man! All that has ever been said is true, so far as it goes; but—"

"Hold!" said Germain. "No use for you to attempt to go farther in speech than Mark Burndale went in his delirium, John. Say something quiet and let it suffice. I will understand what you would say."

John took a reclining position upon the rock beside his friend and looked so long and pensively at the sunset that Germain thought he had forgotten him. But by-and-by St. Bertrand turned toward him and said softly: "I have seen Onar, the goddess of dreams."

He looked a moment longer to see if Germain had kept his promise to understand him. He saw that he had. Then he looked away again into the glowing west. They sat on together without another word, but in the most delightful

companionship, until the colors began to tone down in the western sky, until they had cooled to blue and gray, until the shadows of the jack pines came creeping over the gently swelling and needle bestrewn ground even to the foot of the hermit rock, until the dew fell and the first star began to wink hard in his up-waking to keep his night vigil.

"We must call on her soon—we had better start now," said Germain.

"Well, so you have seen her! How did it come about? I intended to present you in due form."

"It came about most naturally and beautifully."

They walked on a little way in silence.

"Germain, do you believe in answer to prayer?"

"Why, of course I do, you blank idiot! Why do you ask such a question in this connection?"

"Onar came to me in answer to prayer," said St. Bertrand, so composedly that Germain took him to be wholly in earnest.

"Thunder!"

"My profane friend, I am afraid you swear more than you pray. As you are a success in life and I am not, that is not a strong argument in favor of prayer, I know; nevertheless, I believe in prayer. And, truth to tell, this afternoon I

was praying. I have been too humbled and too ashamed to pray as I used to; but this wonderful spiritual landscape and the beauties of the day conspired to bring me more into my normal state of mind. I was praying for deliverance. I do not know how long I had been so engaged. My prayer was not audible; I prayed as I walked. At last I sat down under a juniper tree, and so prayed again for deliverance. 'O God, send thine angel to set me free,' were in my mind, when I lifted up my eyes, and there she came, with elastic step, directly toward me. She seemed hardly to touch the ground. Her face was slightly flushed from exercise; her hat, confined with ribbons about her neck, hung at her back; and the sunshine was in her hair. In one hand she held a nosegay of wild flowers, and in the other hand she swung a flowering branch. She had evidently been to the forest, half way to Brookings. What could this mean, except an answer to my prayer?"

"How much do you mean by that, John?"

"I hardly know," replied St. Bertrand, softly. In some way my fortunes and those of Miss Onar Melbourne are cast into the same lap."

"What farther can you divulge with reference to these fortunes, thou gypsy seer? I am also

interested in the said fortunes, you will kindly remember."

St. Bertrand turned a sharp look of inquiry into the face of his friend.

"No, not that. I love Onar, too, as everybody must who sees her. But I could never make her happy as her husband; and I never could win her. Nevertheless, the fortunes are important, in a worldly way, for two such as you. I confess that I foresaw this; and that does not imply any very great intuition. You are the only man I ever met who could hope to win her. She is the only woman I ever met who could win you wholly and solely. You were born for each other. And when I have said that, I have paid you two the greatest compliment in my power. But it is a question whether you can live upon your dreams."

"I rather think I can manage to take care of a family, if I should be so fortunate as to have one!"

"Good! I believe your prayer was answered in the coming of Onar. But you have some serious rivals to meet, old fellow. Burndale was first on the field, and made a good impression."

"Whatever his powers may be, she would not give him a thought in this connection."

"Well, there is Gerald Holmes. He, with his

brother and his brother's wife, from Boston—you remember them—is now at the castle, a guest for the summer."

"Holmes is a fine fellow. He would be more likely to succeed. Has she been long acquainted with him?"

"I understand that he was at his brother's all last winter, while Onar was there. They must have become well acquainted. I think it was he who commended us to her attention. You must not be ungrateful, John."

"The lady belongs to the man who can win her and make her happy. If there is an engagement between them, I shall hold it sacred; but there is not, and I have won her."

"Good, again! Your angel has, even so soon, brought you out of your morbid state. But—confound you!—I hope she will lead you a chase and take some of that conceit out of you, before she surrenders."

"I would not have spoken so to any one else, old man. It is not conceit; but simply what I have seen. That she can love me is the only weakness that I can imagine in her."

"Something has passed between you already. You did not finish telling about your meeting."

"Well—I do not know that I ought to tell it,

even to you—She did not see me until I rose in her path, and only a few steps from her. She was perfectly self-possessed, and dignified; yet very sweetly modest. She gave me such a swift, keen, searching look as I had never received in my life before. I spoke at once.

"‘I did not see you until you were here; if I had seen you I would have risen before. I am John St. Bertrand. You will know my name, and that you have nothing to fear.’

"I stepped aside as I spoke. She smiled pleasantly and bowed, saying;

"‘Thank you. I am Miss Melbourne. I have met some of my most valued friends here in the wilderness without formal introduction. I shall know you when you call this evening.’

"‘Thank you.’

"I did not stare; and she did not come a step nearer to me in passing; but as she passed I saw the most glorious blush mantle her cheek, and suffuse her ears and neck. She read me, and I stirred her heart."

"Perhaps you flatter yourself."

"No. You never saw her blush, did you?"

"The color comes and goes often; but only in a tinge, never in a blush. Did she really blush?"

She really blushed, old man, rosy red, too."

"I believe she never blushed so for any man before. But do not be too sure of her. She is too rare a gem to be bought for naught."

"Thank you! but I feel myself reviving."

"Ha! Excuse me! Really, if that blush was for you, from her heart unexpectedly stirred by love, she has paid you a compliment that might well turn the head of any man. We shall see her now in about two minutes, so steady yourself. And let me assure you that you will not see her blush again. One such mark of favor, surprised from such a girl, is a volume to be often re-read, but not often re-written."

"I agree with you. I am glad, too, that you have warned me. I might have been expecting it. I feel like a sophomore, in danger of forgetting his manners!"

Germain stopped and confronted him. "I see the self-poised St. Bertrand, on account of one little woman, afraid of forgetting his manners! This, then, is love!"

They soon reached the castle. The whole house was opened onto the verandas, and Onar and her guests were sitting there, enjoying the cool air of the evening. As Germain and St. Bertrand approached, Onar rose and went down the steps to meet them, as was her almost universal habit.

"Good evening, Mr. Germain. Good evening, Mr. St. Bertrand. Welcome to Onar Castle. I wish, now that I have so many friends here, that it were a castle, indeed; but I suppose the gentlemen greatly enjoy tenting."

The gentlemen responded, and accompanied her up the steps. Gerald and Thomas Holmes, Viva and Burndale, were there. They were all acquainted, except Viva and St. Bertrand. Onar introduced them, and they three sat down, a little apart from the others. The ever mischievous Viva was alive to the occasion, and said; "I did not know that you two were acquainted."

"I met Mr. St. Bertrand in my walk," replied Onar. "I nearly ran over him, in my abstraction. He knew me, and told me his name; then I knew him, my Viva. How does that please your Bostonian ideas of propriety?"

"Onar, Onar! I am shocked! I cannot allow any such ceremony as that to stand. Mr. St. Bertrand, allow me to present you to my friend, Miss Melbourne."

"But, Mrs. Holmes, if my introduction to Miss Melbourne was not valid, then I have not been properly introduced to you; and you are not at all qualified to present me to—"

"The legal mind," mused Mrs. Holmes.

"—Miss Melbourne. I am perfectly satisfied with the introduction that came so naturally and pleasantly in the wilderness. But, Mrs. Holmes, I really desire the pleasure of your acquaintance. Your husband knows me very well, allow him to present me."

"But that would be casting doubt upon the validity of our introduction, Mr. St. Bertrand; perhaps we had better call some mutual friend, and begin over," laughed Onar.

"Rather than that, unless Mrs. Holmes will recognize your introduction, I must forego the pleasure of her acquaintance. No introduction can take the place of that one in which we first met. Do I speak for you as well as myself?"

"You speak for me also," replied Onar, still laughing, and wondering and fearful as to Viva's next move.

Viva settled herself cosily between the two and said, confidentially; "Please tell me about that auto-introduction in the woods. It must have been mutually enthralling, indeed, to make a young man willing to forego my acquaintance rather than to accept, in addition to it, a regular introduction. Or else I have lost my charm. Ah! so I have! I am married! Well, I will leave you, my Onar, to lose your charm in the same

way, and go dutifully to my beloved husband."

She arose; but Onar's arm was around her, and she drew her down into her lap.

"What is it that Gerald calls you? A saucy minx? Mr. St. Bertrand does not know you, Viva. He may think you are insane, or only half witted, hearing you talk so. She is neither, let me assure you, sir; but we all spoil her, and she is always delightfully shocking to the staid society prudes. I hope you understand her."

"I think that I do, perfectly. The spirit of Mischief, with cap and bells, delights to ride on the top of her delicate ear, there to whistle and sing, and anon to whisper therein. The spirit of Mischief finds a sister in Mrs. Holmes, who laughs, and is ultimately persuaded to perform for the delectation of her friends. But she is sweet-tempered and true. Her—"

"Onar, let me go!"

"—heart is gentle and kind. She—"

"Onar, let me go! He's making love to me!"

"—would be watching for the coming hurt, and stop before the hurt came. Do I read her—"

Viva broke away.

"—aright, and so vindicate my reputation of gypsy-medium?"

Onar inwardly collapsed when she heard the

appellation which she had written to Germain; but she simply said; "Fully, Mr. St. Bertrand. I am glad that you understand my dear friend so well."

St. Bertrand had spoken the appellation for Onar's ear alone; but—

"What a reputation!" said Viva, turning again to Onar. "I am afraid he will see your charms, and carry you off in his wagon. I must go for help!"

"What is the trouble here?" asked Gerald Holmes, coming up. "Did I hear some one calling for help?"

He had been watching for an excuse to join in the conversation.

"Yes, I did, Gerald. Mr. St. Bertrand has bewitched Onar and is trying to carry her off in a gypsy wagon. I thought maybe you would like to help me rescue her."

The two gentlemen who were hit by this double stroke joined in the laugh at their expense; and, as their eyes met, each one knew the other to be an honorable and friendly, but determined rival.

Burndale looked at these men, and for the first time feared that his hopes might be disappointed. But he was an inmate of Onar Castle, and so he

certainly had as fair a field as any of them. He therefore joined them now with fairly good hope. As he did so, Holmes was saying; "That would be very much in keeping with the general impression that one receives in this weird country. Burndale and I had a strange experience early last winter in this vicinity, St. Bertrand."

"What was it?" he asked.

"Why, we think Onar Castle is haunted."

"Pshaw! Holmes, speak for yourself. I never said so, nor thought so," said Burndale.

I, then, think Onar Castle is haunted."

"I suppose you mean that you think there are spirits about the place," said Onar.

"Yes."

"I haven't a doubt of it. Indeed, my own spirit often haunts the little house in that manner. I sit at my fireplace in my 'old Kentucky Home' and my spirit flies away to Onar Castle. Here I play my organ and other instruments of music, and sometimes I sing. There is something inspiring in the loneliness of the place. Then I wander about the house from room to room, and then I fly away home again, take up my abode in my body that has all the time been sitting there, and find the fire low and my body chilly."

Holmes and Burndale looked at each other

out of the corners of their eyes, covertly.

After a moment's pause Onar added, half to herself; "But I do not suppose that any one who might be here at such a time would know that my spirit was here, nor would my spirit know of their presence."

"I am not so sure about that. One might see you as a —"

"Spook?" laughed Onar.

"Well, no. At least there might be signs of your presence."

"Pshaw! Explain."

"For instance, do you ever dream of being cold up here, and of building a fire in your furnace?"

"Yes, I have done so. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just supposing a case," answered Holmes a little lamely.

Onar looked from him to Burndale, saying; "Mr. Burndale, your friend is not quite candid. What does he mean?" Then—she must have some vent for her laughter—"Mr. Burndale, when did it come into vogue for the gentlemen to wear feathers in their hats?"

Now Burndale had worn Onar's ostrich plume in his hat all summer, much to the amusement of the whole company, to whom he would offer no explanation. The hat now hung in the sight

of all. He reached for it and, removing the plume, handed it to Onar, saying; "Miss Onar, that feather came to us from the skies. Holmes said he saw an angel drop it when she locked the gate of Heaven. But I think he was mistaken, for the key attached to it proved to be the key to my lock on your cellar door."

"And it came to us when our feet were freezing," added Holmes.

"I should say it was a God-send, then." She handed the plume to Burndale, saying; "Keep your plume for future good luck!"

Burndale took it, for he wanted it. Then he produced the key, saying; "Here is the key, and how under the canopy it attached itself to that feather and flew from wherever you left it to me, I would very much like to know."

"Keep the key, also, Mr. Burndale. In case your business should chance to call you again into the vicinity of Onar Castle, especially in the winter, you might find it useful."

"No, the uncanny thing! You keep the key, and I'll keep the feather. May they be reunited by visible means sometime!"

"Hold on, sir!" cried Thomas Holmes, "You are taking unfair advantage of your rivals!"

The little group broke up, laughing.

CHAPTER X

GATHERING THE FRUIT

One day toward the close of summer Thomas Holmes received a telegram, calling him home. This broke up the company at Onar Castle.

Gerald went home with his brother; and, for a few days longer, Burndale found quarters with Germain and St. Bertrand. He was determined to know his fate before he left, and was watching for a suitable opportunity. It came one day when Germain and St. Bertrand went on a two days' fishing excursion. They urged him to go with them, but he excused himself, and planned his attack upon Onar Castle. He hoped to live over again the evening and night of the storm. He called at the very same hour at which he had called a year before. He wore Onar's feather in his hat. He came gaily up to the house, and Onar met him after her pleasant custom, laughing at his knightly head-dress.

After a few moments of pleasantries, he said, so soberly that Onar was on her guard instantly; "Miss Onar, I have come to-night to ask a favor of you. One year ago to-day, at just this time, you played for me the most wonderful music I ever heard. Will you be so kind as to repeat that selection for me now?"

"I fear I cannot, Mr. Burndale. The selection was improvised. I have never been able wholly to recall it. But I will play for you, as best I can, if that will please you."

"Will you improvise?"

"If you prefer that, I will."

"I do; but wait. I shall be lost after you have played, so let me say first that I am going home to-morrow; and I very much desire to ask you two or three questions before I go. In some ways I am a privileged character. The others must call you Miss Melbourne; I may call you Onar, You remember—"

"Yes, I said; 'I am only Onar.' Are not those the very words?"

"Yes, the very words. What did they signify?"

"That I belong to a fated race, which will end when I die."

"I do not believe in that kind of fate. I believe in God; and so do you, Onar. Does my

privilege in respect to the use of your name give me more or less privilege in regard to your favor?"

"No one has my respect and favor more than you, Mr. Burndale. Excuse me a moment while I get your key."

Onar hastened to her room and secured the padlock and key. She stood undecided for a moment, nervously turning the key back and forth in the lock, and seeking, with all her soul in vigorous action, to find a way of escape for the poor man down stairs. She knelt a moment at her bedside. Then she arose, and calmly went to her task—a task that must ever make a true woman's heart ache—a task, to perform which nobly, requires more heroism than to face a cannon.

"Here is your lock and key, Mr. Burndale. If you go home to-morrow you had better take them. They have performed their work well, and have proved your kindness and good faith. Now let me take my plume from your hat while I tell you something that no one else in the whole world knows. Perhaps I may tell you two such secrets. First of all, I was here when you and Mr. Holmes called last winter—"

"What! Were you here in the house, then?"

"Yes, locked in my room with Huraldo. Come here Hu. Do you remember, sir? I had to watch the old fellow to keep him still."

Huraldo whined and touched her hand with his nose. Then he went to Burndale and put up his paw.

"I had just finished a midnight hymn to the stars, and had come up to my room, when I heard the neigh of a horse. I wish to show you a very interesting feature of that room now."

She touched a bell, and Dinah appeared.

"Mammy Dinah, please go up and light the gas in my room, and wait there to put it out when we come down."

Dinah left on her errand, and Onar continued: "The doors were open from the music room into the hall, and the stairway is open—please follow me—as you see. Then this door into my room was open, and—see my skylight? Look up to the stars. The skylight was all open that night as you see it now. When I heard the horse I locked the door. I did not think of closing the skylight until you were too near for me to do so without attracting attention. When you spoke of your freezing feet, as you stood under my window, I felt that I must relieve you; but I wished to avoid the embarrassment of making

my presence known. I thought of the plume and the key and the skylight. It was a success; and I laughed to myself at the remarks of you both, and was glad to make you comfortable, at least in body. When Mr. Holmes made his last appeal at my door, I was just about to respond; but you interferred, and I was spared that unpleasantness. I thank you, and appreciate your delicacy.

"Now you are wondering how I came in and went out without leaving tracks. Dinah, light a lamp, and show us the tunnel."

After exploring the tunnel, they returned to the parlor.

"It is not pleasant to part from friends, Mr. Burndale, especially when we are not to meet soon, perhaps never. I have let you into these secrets of my castle because I wanted to let you know that, however unhappy we may feel at our parting, I have the utmost confidence in you, and have trusted you beyond any other friend. Now shall I play for you?"

"I appreciate your confidence, Onar. I think there is another secret. I will not ask for it. Yet, if it will help me to say this good-by that you have put upon my lips, in mercy tell me!"

"Mr. Burndale, look at me, and realize the

sacrifice that I am making to help you!"

Burndale looked up, and was alarmed. The trembling form and ashen face belied the calm voice.

"Onar, Onar! Don't tell me. Shame on my selfishness! Sit down please. Are you faint?"

"Mr. Burndale—"

"Pray, do not tell me!"

"After this folly, I must tell you, for my own sake as well as yours. My mother, my grandmother and my great-grandmother all died within a year after their marriages, and each left an infant girl. I am the last of that fated race. I must never marry to bring a husband to this doom. Hush! I see that I must tell you all. In spite of all this, I—Mark Burndale, no one in the world, not even the man himself, knows this, unless by his wonderful power to know my soul at sight—"

"Say no more, Onar. You love John St. Bertrand. You have kept your secret heroically; because, for you to love—I have had dreams of what it means; and for you to love such a man—I might have known that you could not love a smaller man than he. Lay aside this folly about fate. As God is good you will yet be happy in answer to my prayer. Yet I believe you can and

do love me as a friend, and I believe that it will add to your happiness to know that I can and do accept that love, and leave the other for the only man in the world who has the power to win your response."

"Mark Burndale, do you mean this? Then you are a hero. I have never known a father, a mother, sister or brother. Are you sure of yourself? Can I trust you?"

"Fully. In fact, if I am a hero, it is because I have had the courage to think for a moment of gaining more than you have granted me. Indeed that thought was presumption, and I have known it all along. So I am not a hero, but a presuming idiot who has received more than he deserves."

"Your words make me very happy and very sorry at the same time."

"And I have made you very tired, too. So I will say good-night. But with this understanding between us may I see you often?"

"Certainly. But, Mark, do you realize how a woman guards her one great secret, and what it costs her to reveal it?"

"I should be blind, indeed, if I could not see what it cost you; and I measure your kindness by it, and thank you for your sacrifice."

"I did not tell you anything. You guessed."

"Ah, then I may tell it to everybody I see!"

"Tell what you guessed? Yes."

"I'll never tell. Good-night!"

Once again Mark Burndale passed from the presence of Onar out into the night. She watched him from her window as he wandered away into the darkness. Then she went to her harp and sat toying with her fingers among the strings, as she thought: "I wonder if I spared him any pain by telling him my secret. Oh, how could I be so weak and foolish!" But this last expression had no reference to her conduct toward Burndale. She was thinking of St. Bertrand. "I loved him at first sight—shame!" Her head fell upon the arm that held the harp, and if St. Bertrand could have seen her then he would have been satisfied. "And I have no right to love—He knows, too, that I love him—shame!—But after all it was not wholly my fault; he reads people as if they were open books—That power is mine, too—he loves me—It is awful."

She rose and walked up and down the room for a long time. Then she murmured: "This, then, is love. It is the only part of those old diaries that I could not have written. Now I could write all—all, even that sentence in the diary of my great-grandmother, Onar: 'Such

love as this, which causes the blood to surge through my heart, and my whole soul so to throb, is—is half pain—Ah, well, then the divinest joy is half pain.’ And so it is. Ah, John St. Bertrand, you are the only man I ever met who moved me with the least desire to be always with him, but you who have done this—you I love too well to permit myself this joy of heaven here, only to force you so soon into the sorrow of that perdition which the lovers of Onar and her daughters have been compelled to bear. No! Never! O God, make me strong to deny!”

The hot blush has gone now, and it has left a pained, white face. As if drawn by an invisible hand she went unconsciously to her organ bench. Slowly her first love song arose and floated out into the midnight. Onar’s organ never spoke before. It throbs, now, and trembles as if afraid and seeking to escape the passion that it had never felt before. It is startled into a thousand quivers of joy and pain as Onar’s spirit breathes softly through every pipe, now a breath of divine love—a transport of happiness—now a sob of pain born of the touch of Satan upon the race, now both love and pain blending in that half-laugh, half-cry which is more piteous than either.

And still no one came to comfort the suffering

soul. The sadest breath in the organ was the cry of loneliness that never ceased to pour its piteous lament into the full harmony. Alone—alone—in every key in every pitch and degree of "forte" and "piano," it sounded on. Sometimes love's hand pushed steadily at the stop and almost gained consent to push it in—"Love is not alone; there is a beloved—there are two, not one—there is companionship, Onar, companionship the divinest, for it is God-inspired. Push in the stop—in—in?" "No, no! not for me! I almost forgot!" And Onar's true hand is again upon the stop and it comes out in full power—"alone—alone!"

But as the hours passed Onar was overpowered. Her fingers were upon the keys; but a soul that was stronger than hers, weakened as it was by the long struggle, came boldly in, unseen, pushed in the stop and said with a quiet authority that astonished the startled organ, and set Onar aquiver with the divine joy that a woman feels when the soul that has mastered her soul speaks: "Leave that stop in, my darling. I have come at last, and am here to stay. Many miles may separate our bodies, as rods separate them now; marriage may be denied us; never mind. Though our lips never touch with the kisses of love, our

spirits are blended forever. Leave that stop in, my Onar. I am with you henceforward, forever."

The fishing proved unsatisfactory. St. Bertrand was abstracted and answered his friend in monosyllables. Germain was amused and a little bit disgusted. He was not quite up to this high-flown love. At last he said; "Well, my boy, we have evidently come to a turn in the road. At the corner you found a fair maiden who has taken hold of your heart-strings and is leading you away from your old friend. May she lead you better, as I think she will. But the vacation is evidently over. I have some business that really ought to be attended to. What do you say to returning alone to pack up our tent while I go on home to-day?"

"Have I been neglectful, Germain? So I have. Forgive me! But you know all; and you must make for me such excuses as you can. Do what you think is best and I will obey orders."

"I will then take an afternoon train for home and you can follow with the baggage when you get ready."

So it came about that John St. Bertrand found himself in the vicinity of Onar Castle at about eleven o'clock on the evening of Burndale's visit.

As he walks on he thinks: "I have read of love at first sight and have partly believed that such a thing might be very possible. It is perfectly reasonable. But I did not know love until I saw Onar. I loved her instantly—and she loved me. I am sure of it. But what have I to offer her? Debts and an already blighted career.—Yet, if Onar loves me, she loves me for myself as she saw me at that moment. She does not know anything about me—not enough to prejudice her toward me, at least—No, she loves me because she sees me as I am and finds me to be her soul's counterpart. In that event she will love me in debt or out—in prison or in paradise. But I love her. There's the rub. I must protect her from myself. I could never marry her and disgrace her with my debts and poverty.—But, if she loves me, would not I cause her greater suffering—I seem foolish to suppose so—to hesitate to marry her, even as I am?—Well, well, our love is an open secret between us. I will speak and tell her all about myself. Then we shall see. She is strong and true and our love is unselfish.—There will be a difficulty in that; Onar will seek my happiness even at the complete sacrifice of her own. I must be on my guard.—Truth to tell, when two people really love each other they have

already taken each other, by a divine decree of nature, 'for better, for worse.' The souls of those who love plead to be together, both in sorrow and in joy, in disgrace and in honor.—And the intenser the experience, of whatever nature it may be, so much the intenser is this yearning of the soul for its mate."

So, thinking as he walked, St. Bertrand slowly drew near to Onar Castle. He passed the point where he should have turned to go to the tent, drawn by an invisible power on to the castle. His lodestone drew him.

Meanwhile, Burndale had been treading again the paths that he trod a year ago, and was now approaching the path that led from the lake in which they fished. He, also, was walking slowly and with bowed head. The men came face to face before either was aware of the near presence of the other.

"Ah! Good evening, Burndale."

"Good evening, St. Bertrand. You are back sooner than you expected to be."

"Yes. The fishing was not in keeping with my state of mind."

"I see you are directing your steps toward the castle. The mistress is at home, or was a short time ago; but are not you late for a call?"

"I did not think of calling. In fact I did not realize that I was so near the castle. I was in a somewhat abstracted mood. I suppose that you have spent the evening there."

"Yes. I was there until an hour or two ago."

"I hope you had a pleasant evening. You had a pleasant entertainer, certainly, did you not?"

"You think so? Of course, every one thinks so. Miss Onar is a remarkable woman."

"I have noticed before that you use her first name with considerable freedom; I suppose upon the ground of having known her longer than the rest of us. Does she approve of this?"

"I use her name in that manner at her express request. But you need not quiz me in that fashion, my friend, nor feel any embarrassment on my account. There is a perfect understanding between Onar and myself. We entered into a compact this evening that settles everything. She is to be my—"

"Listen!"

The cause of St. Bertrand's exclamation was the rising cry of Onar's organ. She had been playing for some time; but heretofore the sound had not reached the ears of these men. One strain, played with a little more urgency of pleading, caught their attention. They both

hastened over the needle-bestrewn ground, which received a foot-fall and gave back no sound, to a little eminence near by; and the music was heard more distinctly. They listened quietly, both of them deeply moved. It was Onar's hand on that stop, when love would have pushed it quite in, that first caused her music to reach the ears of the men.

Burndale listened, and his manhood said to his heart; "That is for St. Bertrand." Aloud he said; "Her music is very beautiful but rather plaintive it seems to me. I will go on to the tent, I think. Will you be in soon?"

St. Bertrand seemed not to hear.

Burndale looked at him a moment in mute wonder at the complete absorption of the man. He stood with his hat in his hand in the attitude of one who seeks to command by the mere thought without the medium of words.

His strong, lithe body was bent slightly forward to listen; his dark eyes burned upon Onar Castle with a feverish fire; his lips, at first slightly parted, were firm set now. He was pushing in that stop, saying to Onar, with the authority of the love that had mastered her—saying calmly, and in those deep tones of the soul that are ever heard, as clearly beneath the din of conflict as

under the quiet of peace, heard as the only audible sound, though the soul were riven with noise; "Leave that stop in, my darling!"

Onar heard and obeyed. There were yet notes of sorrow and of pain in the music, but all was hallowed and made tolerable by the tremulous notes of companionship.

One change in the playing was so rapid and so decided that St. Bertrand's handsome face beamed with a holy joy. As the music fell he hastened forward with a noiseless step that he might not lose a note of the soothing close. As Onar drew in the golden thread of her love-song she drew her lover to her very door. It was too late to retreat. Onar saw him. She started back, and Huraldo growled. But Onar knew him at sight, and did not start back from fear; and Huraldo knew him as he came up the steps. St. Bertrand's soul was full of the rapture of his first love. At once he saw in that glorious blush the confirmation of his certainty that he had understood her. He stepped to her side and spoke in a voice low and so resonant with love that it set every string in the perfectly attuned harp of Onar's soul to vibrating.

"Onar, I have heard your love-song. The first that I heard was the *accelerando* that cried

'alone—alone.' My soul called out to you and I think you heard me, for you soon began the diminuendo leading to the close of your song; and I, pressing nearer to get the last notes, found myself at your door as the last cord was dying. Ah! Your kindling eye, and your majestic pose warn me not to come here as though I were already the accepted choice of your heart. Is it offensive to a woman to be claimed? She would be wooed and won, if the wooer be strong enough to win. Forgive me! I bow down and kiss your hand. But it is all a farce, and you and I love reality. I had never loved until I had met you. And you knew from the first that I loved you as men do not often love. I knew also that you loved me as few women have power to love; and I think that each of us understood the other fully as well as he understood himself. Our love has been a secret well known by us both from the first. Need there be any feigning between us, dear Onar? My summer has been one long hymn of thanksgiving to him who made for man an help meet for him. At the beginning of summer I saw the help suited to me, and I had not expected ever to see her. Not that I am so much more worthy than other men, but tuned to a peculiar key to

which you only have ever responded. There may be reasons why you will not let me claim you; but you are mine whoever may hold your body in thrall."

Onar had been rosy, then haughty, in turn; now pale and faint she leaned against the casing for support.

"You are pale and faint, my darling. I have approached you too impulsively and too preemp-torily. Forgive me! I would not have allowed you to fall, faint, against that door-case, but that you have not given me the slightest permission, yet, to touch you. I have spoken with assured confidence because I know the condition of both our hearts, and counted upon truth, and forgot to reckon with pride—and something else, I know not what; but you are my queen as well as your own. If I may, I will support you to a chair."

Onar slowly raised her white, trembling hand. He clasped it, pressed it to his lips, and encircling her waist with his strong arm he led her to a divan and sat down beside her. The rich blood now returned in a flood. Her hands covered her blushing face and she allowed her head to rest lightly upon his shoulder.

"It is useless to resist, John," she said softly, "you have stormed my castle like fury and have

captured the mistress. All that you have said is true."

Then springing up and facing him, with her hands clasped before her in calm despair, she added; "O God, too true!"

"Ah, Onar, I heard that in the organ. I saw that in your pale face after the pride was gone. Sit down, darling, and tell me. God is good and kind. All's well! We will believe and face the truth in the strength of this assurance. Will you sit by my side again, or will you have this chair?"

"Command me, John, for this evening only. You are as true and as pure as God makes us mortals. I trust you fully. It will be so pleasant to hear you say; 'Sit here or there, please, my Onar,' for my heart is hungry for your love and is bleeding because of the pain I must cause you."

"Please, my Onar, sit as will best help to soften the blow that you are about to give me. You are to be actor; choose the surroundings."

"Sit down again, then, where we were, John."

He did so, and she brought a hassock to his feet; then, seating herself upon it, she clasped her hands upon his knees and looked up into his face. He took her clasped hands in both of his and waited quietly but eagerly for her to speak.

"What did you hear in the organ, John?"

"I heard something that made me say; 'Miles may separate our bodies, as rods separate them now; marriage may be denied us; never mind! Though our lips never touch with the kisses of love, our spirits are blended forever. Leave the 'sole' stop in, my Onar. I am with you henceforward forever.' But, darling, we are not now separated in body."

He leaned forward, and that first kiss was as chaste as their love.

"There, John, it is my first and last kiss of that kind; let it prove how much I love you. Yet what you have said is true again, 'Our spirits are blended forever,' and I shall never again feel so all—all alone in the wide world. But, John, I am under a curse, and marriage is denied us."

"Under a curse! I did not expect to hear you say that. I thought you would say; 'I am bound to Mark Burndale.' Yet, good fellow as he is, I did not see how you could ever have made so serious a mistake."

"You are very self-important, Sir John. I might have done worse. Mark Burndale, on the whole, is my dearest friend, next to Vivian Holmes. Mark loves me, too, in a way; but he cannot live in our world. Mark felt it, too, but

he did not know just where he stood. He came to me this evening with the evident intention of making a great blunder. I was proud of him. I think he was going to get at the matter in a much more flattering way than you did, sir, with your boots and spurs. But I was permitted to spare him, John, I fondly hope, something of the pain that you have forced me to cause you. I told him my curse; but I saw that he did not believe in it at all. Then I started to tell him—shame on me! but O, dear John, much as a woman cherishes her great secret, I wanted to spare poor Mark, if I could. Was I very unmaidenly, John? But I did not tell him; he stopped me, saying that I loved—”

Again that glorious blush.

“He is more discerning than I had supposed; you have not shown one outward sign of the love he guessed.”

“And he said that you were the only man on earth who could win my love, or something to that effect. Then he asked a friend’s love, and I gave it with a whole heart. Mark Burndale is a nobleman!”

“I met him this evening, not far from here. We listened together a few moments to your organ; but before that, we had spoken of you,

and he said ; ' We entered a compact this evening that settles everything ; she is to be my—' Then your music broke off his sentence. If he had spoken one word more, it would have been ' friend,' not ' wife,' I understand."

" Yes."

" Very satisfactory ! But I am now all at sea. I have heard something about there being some mystery connected with you ; for instance, Dinah once told Burndale that you were older than she. If that be your curse—whatever your curse may be—I will take the risk of it."

Onar laughed softly ; but instantly became serious. " It is not that ; but it has some connection with it. Dinah received a terrible shock in her infancy, and I suppose she has never fully recovered from it. I had better begin at the beginning and tell you the whole story. My great-grandmother's name was Onar. Her father was the last male descendent of our line. Just before her marriage, Onar took Dinah, then a child about eight years of age, as her especial charge. Dinah had been bereft of both parents in one day. While her mother was very ill her father was killed by the kick of a horse. They did not keep the terrible news from Dinah's mother and she died from the shock, leaving a

babe which also died. Dinah was an affectionate child, and the loss of both of her parents in one day was a terrible shock to her. Onar soon married, and, within a year, gave birth to a little girl, and died. Her husband was driven to insanity by her tragic death, and died the same day, by his own hand. Onar was the last of her race; but a maiden aunt of her husband's still lived on in the old homestead, took care of the property and reared the little girl. Dinah was now about ten years of age, and still suffering somewhat from her parents' tragic death. It so happened that she was a witness of the suicide of Onar's husband. She gave the alarm and fainted, and was seriously unbalanced for some time; but she finally seemed to recover fully and became nurse to the little white girl. This little white child was my grandmother. She married, and when Dinah was about thirty-five years old, my mother was born. But grandmother died. After the funeral grandfather went to war, and has never been heard from since. Again poor Dinah was shocked in the same set of nerves that had suffered so seriously before, and again she nursed the white baby. Meantime, the maiden aunt had died and Dinah had married Moses. These two faithful negroes cared for the growing

Missis, and for many years took care of the property under the general supervision of an attorney to whom my grandfather had given power.

"As my mother, of whom I am the exact image, grew to womanhood, she grew into the perfect likeness of her mother and of her grandmother. The likeness between us four women is remarkable. As each one, in turn, grew under the care of Dinah to the age of my great-grandmother at the time when she took the suffering negro child into her care, Dinah's shocked mind went back to the beginning; and it seemed to her that the woman, so like the one who had died, was she who had died. At last, when Dinah was about sixty years old, I was born and named for my great-grandmother, Onar. At the time of my birth a terrible coincidence occurred, which left poor Dinah forever convinced that the error, which she could not be made to relinquish, was true. I was born, and my happy father had just written 'Onar' in the great bible, when he was called suddenly to the barn where a refractory horse was endangering the life of Moses. He hurried out and, entering the yard without due caution, received a kick from the vicious beast, which killed him instantly. The panic was so

great among the negroes that no one thought of keeping the awful shock from my young mother. She heard the story, recalled the fate of her race and quietly died. Again Dinah nursed the white baby. And to her, she was the Misse Onar who took her when she was bereft of both her parents. From this conviction nothing can turn her. What you say she told Mr. Burndale she firmly believes to be true. Perhaps it is true. My body is young; but my spirit is old in a perenial youth. Do you believe the doctrine of metempsychosis?"

"No."

"If you should ever see the portraits of these women, as they hang in our ancestral hall; and then could read the diaries of all four, you might be strongly inclined to believe that I am my great-grandmother's spirit; and that the body, each generation renewed, in each generation is moulded by the same spirit after the pattern of the original.

"I have told you Dinah's history. Incidentally you have learned the fate which must forever separate us, except in spirit. For the men who have loved us have found us so strong to love them, and they have been so strong to love us, that their very love and ours have proved to be their curse and doom as well as our own. For

myself I do not fear the death, although life would be so sweet—then ; but, John St. Bertrand, I love you too well to lead you from one altar so soon to another.”

Onar's story was told, and a silence like that of the grave filled the room. Her fair head bowed upon the hands which St. Bertrand held in his one palm, while with his other hand he stroked her soft fair hair, as he struggled with the lump in his throat and the throbbing of his heart.

At last, in a voice perfectly controlled, but full of all that struggled in his heart, he said ; “My darling, God, not Fate, is master in the world.”

Then followed a long silence, after which John spoke again : “It is dawn in the east, dear Onar. This has been a long, hard night for you. I will leave you now. Stand up with me and see the morning dawning. Let it be significant for us ! I entreat you, by this sweet and tender love that warms us like sacrificial fires upon the altars of our souls, and that enfolds us as in one ample mantle, fear not ; for God, not Fate, is master in the world.”

With quick, elastic step, he was gone into the morning.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE WING

The following afternoon, as St. Bertrand was on his way to call upon Onar, he met Burndale coming with downcast face and slow step.

"Why so dejected this afternoon, Burndale; are not all well at the castle?"

Burndale shook his head, and answered; "All are gone."

"Gone!" echoed St. Bertrand, stopping abruptly in surprise and in evident pain.

"Yes, the house is closed for the season; and everything is as still and solemn as death. Onar left last year just in this way; but she had been frightened. I hope you did not frighten her last night, Mr. St. Bertrand. You know I am her brother now."

"Give me your hand, Mark Burndale. She told me as much; and you are one of God's noblemen. I suppose I have frightened her away.

I think you know something about her 'curse.' How far do you suppose she will carry that folly?"

"Until she is convinced that it will not touch the man she loves. She will never marry a man until she can be made to see that it will cause him greater suffering to refuse to marry him than it would to marry him and leave him within a year, a widower and in despair."

Burndale took his friend's arm, and together they walked back to the tent. He said; "It will end well. Death only can part you forever; if even death can."

"Death may be the only means of uniting us, but we are one."

The next day "The Haunt of the Spirits" was no longer desecrated by human beings. All had gone, and the silence of nature was unbroken.

Onar watched St. Bertrand as he walked away toward the dawning—watched him until he passed entirely out of her range of vision. Then, with a heavy sigh and her hand upon her heart, she awoke Dinah, and bade her hasten preparations for closing the house and going home. Before noon, they were on their way. It was a sad little procession. Dinah rode old John, in the lead;

Onar followed with Zephyr; and Huraldo, with his tail trailing, followed in the rear. Every little way Onar wheeled her horse to take another look at her beautiful dream-castle, on the little lake of Onar. She seemed to feel that the parting was for a long time, and that the years before she would enter those quiet wilds again would be full of shadows. As she reached the last eminence from which her castle could be seen, she stretched out her hand toward it, and cried, between her sobs; "God be merciful to my beloved." Then she turned quickly and galloped on after Dinah, drying her tears as she sped along.

Again the rushing train is bearing Onar swiftly through the familiar hills of Kentucky. Again her abstracted gaze is upon those hills. But there is a decided difference between the face that looks out of the car window now, and the face that looked out of the same window a year ago. That face was beautiful in the pristine sweetness of a life made roseate by the shining of the sun upon the far-distant clouds of her historic sorrows. This face is more touchingly beautiful because those clouds have been driven, by the wind of the rising storm of life, to the zenith above her. There is no doubt of the change. In

the face a year ago there was just enough of the historic sorrow to win sympathy and love. In this face the present suffering is so unmistakable, and is borne with so fine and sensitive a heroism, that every one who sees it loves and pities and longs to raise a protecting arm.

Poor Dinah feels the change as the forewarning of the doom. She now approaches Onar with a reverent hesitancy; there are tears on her black face as she gently touches Onar's arm, saying; "Misse, it's time to git our things ready. We done got home agin."

"Why, my dear old mammy, you are crying! Are you sorry to get home?"

"No, Misse, now dat you smile agin, lak yer own self, I feel mighty glad ter git home."

"Never mind! Here we are, and your 'ole Mose' is looking for you."

They entered the carriage, and Zephyr and Huraldo followed behind.

"Well, Moses, how is everything at home; has the summer been a good one?"

"Yes, Misse, berry good. Yo' plans tu'n out mighty well. De barns all chock full, an' all de stock doin' fine."

"That is good, Moses. Is there anything that needs my attention, before I go on to Boston?"

I must go on to-morrow, if possible."

Moses' face lost its bright light at once, and he answered slowly; "No Misse, can't say dey is. We all hope you be home to stay some dese days."

"I hope so, too, Moses; but I must hurry on now. I shall probably be gone all winter."

"One night only in the home of my forefathers. Surely I am become a wanderer. But, no, no, it must not be! I must not let him find me. He would follow me here. But when he sees me flee to the end of the continent, he will have regard for so manifest determination, and will not follow me there. I must go."

Back and forth, up and down, before the portraits of those wonderful women, this last one of the four paced steadily, deep into the night. At last she stopped before each one, in turn, and said; "What say you, great-grandmother, Onar, am I right or wrong?"

She seemed to hear her response; "You are wrong, my child. Because I died as I did, you need not fear my fate. Because my husband was so ruined by my death, you need not fear, for your loved one, the same fate."

"What say you, grandmother?"

"I think you are wrong, my child; but I am

not sure. My mother and I, at the same age, in the same way, brought ruin to the men we loved so fondly. But that may be only one of the coincidences of life. Love is so sacred! Lovers should not be separated for any slight reason, nor for a reason that is only great; it must be a reason that is stronger than death."

"What do you say, mother?"

"I think you are right, my child; but I am not sure. Even fate may have been satisfied with my ruin, and with that of my loved one. I died peacefully, having lived with him. How we could have lived apart I cannot see. Yet the life together was so short—so short! Perhaps we could have been together in spirit, and so might have been happy for a longer time. It is an awful risk, in either case, my child; but that a curse is upon our race is beyond question."

"What say you, Onar?"

"My heart cries out to spare my beloved. O cruel girl, to think for a moment of endangering him!"

Then Onar turned away, saying to herself: "It should be sufficient. I will not leave it to a daughter to bring this cruel fate to an end. She would say; 'My mother, Onar, you had received warning sufficient. You should not have been

so weak.' Certainly that would be true. I am decided. I will live to be old, reclaim my property, and leave all to the faithful race of Moses."

"Onar, dear, you have now been with us for a whole week, and you have not told me the cause of your sad face, and of your subdued manner. You are suffering, dear; and very deeply. You are suffering more deeply than you possibly could from any property trouble. I believe it would do you good to tell me about it. I have waited patiently; and you would have told me if the trouble were from any other cause than one. You are in love, Onar; and you are in love with the only man I have ever seen who could possibly win you. And what is more, I have a letter for you from him."

Hereupon Viva held out the letter; and Onar blushed slightly as she reached out, a little too quickly, for it, saying; "I thought you were unusually considerate and full of sympathy; but you were teasing me."

"No, Onar, I was not teasing you. I am so sorry you are not happy. I did not mean to tease you. I think you ought to tell me, and let me love you the more, and sympathize with you."

Then the dear little woman burst into tears.

Onar laid her unopened letter upon the table; and, sitting down beside Viva, drew her head down upon her shoulder, and caressed her hair, as she said; "I did not know that I was acting in so unusual a manner, Viva dear. But I see, now, that I have been very much absorbed in myself. If you will forgive me, I will try to be a better friend, Yes, Viva, you have guessed my trouble. You can divine why I have hesitated to speak about it; and, besides, knowing your kind heart, I did not want to give you pain. If you will excuse me I will go to my room now for a little while, and read my letter; then I will talk freely with you."

"Go and read your letter, my foolish Onar. I know your silly 'spirit' theories. You will yet learn that, for us mortals, the spirit world is not so much to be counted upon as you have thought. I believe God has so ordained that spiritual communion is freest when people are nearest together."

Onar kissed her, and went to her room to read her letter. It dated from Stuart Mansion, Kentucky, and read as follows:—

"Dear Onar:—

After all my poetic fancy about 'Miles may separate our bodies—but our spirits are blended

forever,' I seem only to dream of a reality flown into the regions of the unreal. Perhaps you are truly named 'Onar,' and are to be to me only a dream. It was a precious dream while it lasted, to be remembered forever. There is something very sad about memory! But so real was my dream of love that when I awoke and found you gone!—there are no words! You need none.

"I followed you here. I am sitting now before the portraits of four of the most beautiful women that I have ever seen. I have had Moses and Dinah in here, and have been talking with them about the history of these women. Perhaps this was too great a liberty; but, I think you will not be offended, after what has passed between us.

"I can easily see how, in the atmosphere of this room, your purpose not to marry received added strength; so that you have flown so far that I feel that I have not the right to follow.

"You believe that I would be made unhappy by marrying you, seeing you die, and being left to suffer the loneliness of soul that must follow. That would be true. But I do not believe in fate or in your curse. I believe in God, and in his blessing. My love for you would lead me to flee from you as you have from me, if I believed that this fate were inevitable, and that your curse

may not be stayed. But I do not believe this; and I am writing to shake your faith in the Devil and to strengthen your faith in God.

"Moreover, I am shocked to discover that my 'spiritual presence' theory, though very exalted, and very true for the right conditions, does not work to my satisfaction. My heart keeps crying:

'O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!'

"If that hand were cold, and if that voice were beyond the power of speech, it were grief for the dead, which is not kept alive by the feeble breathing of even a dying hope; and the grief itself would die at last. But when the hand is warm to some other's touch, and the voice is sounding, soft and sweet, in other ears—then—Oh! my Onar, the longing is intolerable!

"We shall both endure, an hundredfold every year, all the suffering that death could bring. To deny ourselves to each other in life, from fear that we may be denied each other by death, is, I believe, to usurp the prerogative of death, if not even that of the Lord who has triumphed over death.

"How does it seem to you, now that we are separated? I may be deceived by the awful pain that gnaws at my heart as I write. Perhaps you

see more truly. I desire your happiness more deeply than my own. But, for me, I had rather live in the sunshine, while the sun does shine, than to rush from the sunshine into a cold, dark, damp and treacherous cavern, to escape the sunshine for fear that sometime a cloud may obscure the sun, and leave me in shadow. You think; "Oh, the shadow would come so soon, and last so long!" Well, better the shadow than the cavern. Besides, there is the sunshine for a day; and then, if God wills so, there is—God.

"I am pleading for you, too, my dear, sweet Onar, believing that our love is reciprocal, and that you, too, are suffering. If you are not, then forget my plea; for it will seem to you to be very selfish, as indeed it would be in that case.

"Will you write to me, darling? I shall stay here for a week or two, looking after your affairs, and waiting for a letter.

"Every one is well at Stuart, and the fall work is being done with faithfulness and skill.

"I am yours for the sunshine, the clouds or the cavern, life or death, as will make you the happiest; but I prefer the sunshine for us both. I am yours, 'for better, for worse,' forever.

John St. Bertrand."

The letter fell into Onar's lap. The strong

man's logic and pleading, seconded by her own love, had slowly, but surely, been driving the pain from her heart and the shadow from her face. A far off, dreamy smile cast its light where the shadow had been. She sat for a long time with her hands clasped upon the letter, in deep thought. Then she read the letter again, and then re-read certain portions again and again; and then, as she sought out the tender expressions of endearment and fed her hungry heart upon them, the sunshine played more fully upon her face, giving it the wonted—more than the wonted—giving it the color that came only for this one man. She smothered her face in the pillow of the divan upon which she sat, until the warm blood flowed back to its normal course. Then she went to her mirror, gave her hair a few skillful touches, smiled coyly back at her radiant face, and touched the bell.

Viva was waiting and listening in the hall below. When the servant appeared to answer the bell, she asked; "Did Miss Melbourne ring?"

"Yes'm."

"I will answer her."

She hastened up the stairs, and tapped lightly, saying; "It is Viva! May I come in?"

The door instantly opened, and Onar stood

radiant before the astonished Viva, who caught her breath and said; "Well, I declare! That letter must be preserved among the historic archives of Massachusetts. Onar, dear, you are so beautiful! And—what has made you so happy?"

"Sit down, Viva, and I will read you my letter."

When the reading was over, Viva asked; "How will you answer it, Onar?"

"I don't know. It has affected me so strangely—given me such sweet hope and rest—that my heart pleads for us both. But I must have time to think calmly. So much is at stake, Viva!"

"Why, certainly, dear, a whole life of happiness is at stake. I declare, that is the most sensible and reasonable love letter that ever I read, not excepting Tom's. He has learned his lesson, and has dropped from the clouds. You had better come down, too, and live here sensibly and cosily until God calls you both up higher."

"Your breezy good sense is always refreshing, Viva. I will try to be sensible and reasonable also; and—we shall see, dear."

"There comes Tom and Gerald. Gerald ought to know this, Onar. You are doing everything that a woman can do to hold him off, but nothing except this will stop him; he loves intensely."

"I ought not to have come, Viva. And if I had known that he would be here, I would not have come. Can't you make known to him that his suit—that I am— There! Viva, you see that I am 'non compos mentis.' I must leave the man to your management."

"I have often spoken with Gerald about you, and have warned him repeatedly. If you will give me the right to refer to this letter, I think I may be able to spare you; but Gerald—!"

At lunch Onar remarked that she would spend the afternoon in the city, and return with Tom. Viva and Gerald drove with her to the station, and then turned back toward home. They had barely turned around when Mr. Holmes said; "Viva, you know all about my feeling for Onar, and you have warned me that I could not win her, and that I had better not try—but—well—have I any chance, do you think?"

"What do you think, Gerald; has she given you any encouragement?"

"No—I am afraid not. She is always kind, but she is elusive. Yet, I think she does not dislike me."

"Must it come to that, then? Must she dislike you before you will give up?"

"Are you certain that I must give up, Viva?"

"My dear brother, I pity you with all my heart, but you must give up."

"What reason have you for being so sure? I know about the 'curse,' but you know that would not cause me to hesitate a moment. I am quite sure that Burndale is out of the lists. I shall not yield until I find that some other man has won her away from me."

"Then, Gerald, it would be criminal in me not to tell you that Onar is wholly won by another."

Holmes did not speak again until they were entering the grounds at home. Viva was crying softly behind her veil.

"Don't cry, little sister. I have been so truly and kindly dealt with in this matter, by both you and Onar, that I have no bitterness to curdle the sweetness of my lost love. I feel sure that 'It is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.' I suppose the successful man is St. Bertrand. Well, God bless them!"

CHAPTER XII

FORECLOSED

"Dear John:—

Your letter reached me yesterday. I can't answer it now, because my experience since I left Onar Castle has not been what I expected it to be. I find that you are right about the 'spiritual presence' theory. It does not satisfy me as I had supposed it would. I was very unhappy and lonely until your letter came. I am very happy to-day; but I must not be too hasty in my conclusions. I hope to reach a more settled state of mind in a few hours, and then I will answer you. I write now only to let you know that I have received your letter, and that I am seeking to know what will be conducive to your greatest happiness.

"I have tried, on two or three sheets, to write some words of love to you, dear John, knowing how your letter has comforted me; but they make

me blush so that I am sure that I bungle at it. I see plainly that I must practise by myself before venturing to write a love letter. I think you said that I am your first love. Your letter would indicate that you are a practised hand at that kind of document. Perhaps it is a part of your legal training, however.

"I have greatly enjoyed thinking of you living for a few days in my dear old home. I hope you may be able to stay there for a long time. You are very welcome. But do not allow the hopeless tangle of my estate to take your attention from more profitable employment.

"My originality has all left me; and, besides, that you may know that I am as truly yours as you are mine, I close with your words; 'I am yours for the sunshine, the clouds or the cavern, life or death, as will make you the happiest; but I prefer the sunshine for us both. I am yours, 'for better, for worse,' forever.

Onar Melbourne.

P. S. I am in deep trouble. Mr. Weatherly has a first mortgage on my home, and John St. Bertrand holds the first mortgage that was ever on my heart. I hope neither will foreclose yet.

Onar."

St. Bertrand, upon leaving Onar Castle had hurried home; and then, only stopping for an hour at the office to get some farther information regarding the condition of Onar's affairs, he had said a hasty good-by to Germain, and pushed on to Stuart. He arrived only a few hours after Onar had left.

For two or three days he studied the old homestead, and especially the ancestral hall with its portraits and records, seeking to learn how best to write to Onar. Finally he wrote the letter that we have already perused.

As soon as this letter was mailed, he gave himself to the tangle of Onar's business. He followed up thread after thread, only to find each one securely knotted in the affairs of Weatherly, by Kronkite, his attorney at law. It became clear that Germain had done his work thoroughly. Everything depended upon the missing papers.

Weatherly, since the time of his imprisonment and release, had employed a faithful man whom he had snared into his employ, to dog Onar's steps. This shadowing had been so skillfully done that the man had never been seen in such a way as to arouse the least suspicion. But he was never far away from her. He gave Weatherly a correct account of Onar's summer at her castle,

of her sudden return, and of her hasty departure for Boston.

The thought of Onar living again for some time in the same house with Gerald Holmes filled Weatherly with an insane jealousy. He hastened to Kronkite's office and said; "Now bring this girl home. Foreclose the mortgage at once. I will not stand it any longer."

Kronkite agreed that nothing was to be gained by delay, and that perhaps Onar might be lost to Weatherly unless immediate steps were taken to force her, in order to save her home, to accept him. Proceedings were begun at once, and pushed as rapidly as possible.

St. Bertrand was deep in the investigation of which we have spoken when he learned of the movement to foreclose the mortgage on Stuart. He immediately telegraphed the fact to Onar, advising her to return at once. Onar replied, giving the time when she would arrive at the city near Stuart.

Moses, with much hesitation, consented to let St. Bertrand meet Onar with a single carriage, and went to the city himself with a heavier conveyance for her baggage.

As Onar stepped from the train, St. Bertrand met her; and placing her hand upon his arm led

her at once, and with scarcely a greeting, to the waiting carriage. His ever watchful eye fell upon a well-dressed traveling man, whom he two or three times detected watching Onar and himself as they crossed the platform and passed through the waiting room to the carriage. The man, apparently waiting for some one, stood not far away as Moses received Onar's checks; and he was still standing there, covertly watching her and St. Bertrand, as they drove away. St. Bertrand looked out of the back window of the closed carriage and saw this distinctly. He called Onar's attention to the man, and asked if she had noticed him on the car.

"Yes, he took the same train that I did from Forest Hills, and has been in the same car with me all the way. He has been rather obtrusive in his watchfulness, but he has kept a respectful distance."

When they had left the city, St. Bertrand said; "I hope, dear, that you have brought the answer to our question. Have not the few hours which you required, in which to think, wholly passed? Your real presence is better. Shall we not be happier together?"

"Yes, for the time we are permitted to live together. I have said enough, dear John. I can

almost hope, when I am with you. I cannot escape the logic and faith of your letter. Perhaps I ought to live in the sunshine, and not to fear for the days to come. But, John, you know that I, my lone self, am all you will get. My property is all gone. My pride rebels against coming to you so. My pride and fear melt away before our love—'our,' John; for you love me, I know. But John, I have not—have I been coy enough? My friend Viva has always said that I am utterly unapproachable by men; but here I am, as soon as you said, 'Come!'"

"Onar, you could not have done otherwise than as you have done, and have been your own true self. Every act of yours since you first saw me has been so true and modest that I have stood in awe of you, yet loved you more."

"I am glad to hear it, sir; for you have not shown much awe. You just snapped your fingers at me, and I came to heel. I have a notion to give you a chase yet."

"No don't. Perhaps I ought to have chased you to Boston. No. I knew that you were not playing a part; so I wrote to you and gave you the time that you were seeking to gain. But I see a tinge of woman's pride in your pleasantry. Tell me truly, darling, did you love me before

you saw that I loved you with all my might?"

"No sir, I did not have time. I hurried as fast as I could, but you were too spry for me."

"Who was conquered first, then, you or I? So soothe your pride."

It is very kind of you to spend so much brain force to prove all this to me, and so to soothe my wounded pride, dear John; but it does not accomplish the intended object; for I should have loved you, but without the blush I gave you, and in silence, if you had not loved me."

Then all the playfulness left Onar's face and eyes as she said; "O what a fate have I escaped; and how truly do I thank God for your love!"

"As I thank God for yours. And, darling, as by the goodness of God we have escaped such a fate, so by his goodness we shall escape the other also. There is an old clergyman about a mile ahead, Onar. You know him. I want to stop there, and two of us go in to see him, and, one, come out. Hush, dear, I must tell you something, and then I will listen to our doom. You spoke of the loss of your property. Yes, in spite of all my efforts and those of Germain, one month from to-day you must vacate Stuart."

"So soon!" The words were spoken calmly, but there was a world of suffering in them.

"Dear Onar, I wish I could spare you this pain; but I cannot. And what is worse, I can't offer you anything but myself, and hardly that, for I am in debt; and what is still worse, debts that ought to have been paid long ago are not paid, and I am in disgrace. I fear that I ought not to have spoken to you of love, or marriage, until I had redeemed myself. I am almost in despair about being able ever to do that. Yet my nature is hopeful, and I cannot give up. But I am without practise or income. I do not see how I can support a wife. Yet I have not spoken thoughtlessly. Our lives are centered in each other without regard to circumstances; and it is your right as much as mine to have a voice in the matter. If the primitive man appeared in me when I stormed your castle, the civilized man now recognizes your equal strength at the council-board. Custom requires me to speak first, and so give you the opportunity to speak without doing violence to primitive instincts. I have dreamed when I ought to have been plodding. I have spent when I ought to have been saving. I cannot find it in my heart to cover you with my shame!"

He bowed his head and was silent. The voice that broke the silence was soft and low and sweet

with sympathy, love's sublimest note.

"John, thank you! Hear my story now, then we can adjudge our case. A few months ago I heard the inner voice saying to me; 'Wasted his substance in riotous living!' Well, I resented the charge at first, and demanded to know in what way it could be true. I found my answer. I had rioted in my dream-life, when I ought to have been attending to my estate. Upon that score, then, we are even. I am afraid that we are both in the woods, John. We have ourselves to blame. Shall we be happier together or apart? How can we work to the best advantage?"

"If I could be sure for you, it would not take me long to decide for myself."

The poor man's head was still bowed upon his breast. Onar looked at him, and the light of Heaven was on her face.

The gentle horse had been going his own gait. He had often stopped at the old minister's cottage. The old man loved Onar as his own child. He had known her mother and her grandmother before her, and he had married them both, and had buried them. The horse turned in and slowly stopped. Poor John was too much absorbed in his sorrow and shame to notice either this or the beaming face of his good angel—the angel whom

he told Germain God had sent in answer to prayer.

"John, the horse has stopped."

John started and looked up. He saw where they were, and looked into the face of Onar with a questioning glance.

"No, John, I will not go in. But if you will be kind enough to step in and ask my dear old friend and his wife to come down to tea, I will thank you. I would like to have them there once more before we are driven away."

John got slowly out of the carriage, and went slowly toward the gate. Then he came back and looked with a burning gaze into Onar's face. Ah, that glorious blush! His step was no longer the step of an old man, but buoyant and firm as he went rapidly up to the door.

"Miss Melbourne asks the pleasure of your company and that of your wife to tea this evening." Then, speaking in a low tone, he added; "Please come prepared to solemnize a marriage, sir. I think Miss Melbourne expects some one to be married."

"Ah, with pleasure, my lad," he replied with a happy smile. Then the smile faded, and a look of fear and sorrow took its place. "Yes—yes—I will be there," he said as he turned away.

"The curse," muttered St. Bertrand, as he also

turned back. But the shadow had passed from his face before he reached the gate.

"Will they come?"

"With great pleasure, dear. But it is getting near tea time already." He shook up the horse, and in a moment more they were entering Stuart Mansion together. In the doorway St. Bertrand turned to speak to Moses, and caught a glimpse of a stranger in the shrubbery. It was the traveling man. St. Bertrand said to Onar; "I will be in soon, dear." Then turning to Moses he said in a low voice; "Send me young Pete, quick."

He went quickly out to where he had seen the man, but he was gone. He kept a careful lookout until young Pete came up to him.

"Pete, some man has followed your mistress from Boston, and I just now caught sight of him in the shrubbery about here. We must find him without being seen, and must shadow him to his stopping place. I presume he will go, perhaps by some roundabout way, to see Weatherly."

"No doubt 'bout dat, Marster. I can track him, without any noise, with my little dog."

He hurried away, and soon returned with a bright little hound which he had trained to follow the scent without noise. The dog soon found the stranger's track, and led off, Pete holding

his leash and following at a long swinging trot.

St. Bertrand returned to the house, and going into the drawing-room sat down to Onar's piano, and began playing softly an impassioned love-song that he had written a few days before. He became absorbed in the music and did not notice the entrance of Onar. She sat down quietly. He finished the song, and turned away with a sigh. As he did so, his eye fell upon her, dressed in the bridal costume of twenty-five years ago. He went quickly toward her, and she arose to meet him.

Presently St. Bertrand said; "This is a beautiful dress, dear."

"I put it on to show you how my mother looked twenty-five years ago. I have the wedding dress of my grandmother, and that also of my great-grandmother, Onar. They are even richer than this. They had great weddings. We will be married more simply, and hope for greater and more lasting happiness."

"Are you afraid, dear?"

"No. God is good, and I am learning to trust him rather than to fear fate. We shall have a hard battle at first; but we can cheer each other, and I am sure we shall win in the end."

"God bless you, dear, you renew my strength."

This conversation was interrupted by the coming of the old clergyman and his wife. Onar presented St. Bertrand; and then, noticing the attention that her costume was receiving from the interested old lady, she said; "You remember this dress?"

"Yes," answered both the old lady and her husband, at once. And the old gentleman hastened to add, with the pride peculiar to many old clergymen; "I married that dress; and I married your grandmother, too."

"Indeed, sir, that is interesting," said St. Bertrand. "And now if you will marry Miss Onar, that will be three generations."

"I will do so, with pleasure, when Miss Onar is ready," he replied; but the shadow settled upon his face, in spite of his evident desire to appear cheerful.

"Are you ready, dear?" asked St. Bertrand, apart, "or do you wish to wait till later in the evening?"

"Now, soon; but I must change my dress first."

"Not by any means on my account, dear."

While this little aside was going on, the old lady had been feasting her eyes upon the rich costume which took her back twenty-five years, to the time when she was a woman in her prime.

"That old lady will devour you, yet, Onar. She is watching you with all her soul in her eyes."

Onar turned and saw the old lady looking back into the past. She went to her side and said; "This dress takes you back into your younger days, I see."

"Yes, dear. You don't happen to have your grandmother's dress, too? I remember it very well. I was quite a young woman when she was married. I would like to go back there just for a glimpse of the old times."

"Yes, grandma, I have the dress just as she wore it."

"Have you?"

"Have you?" echoed the old gentleman.

"Would it be too much trouble to put it on, to please two old people, Miss Onar?"

"Not if Mr. St. Bertrand can content himself to remain unmarried for a few moments longer."

"Ah, my dear friends, you do not realize what you are asking of me! But it is graceful in the young to defer to the pleasure of their seniors; and, moreover, I can not deprive Onar of the pleasure of displaying her finery."

Onar lifted her nose at him a little, and went to her boudoir.

She had been gone but a moment when Moses

appeared in the door. St. Bertrand went out at once. "Well, Moses?"

"Young Pete done got back and gone again. Dat man went right spang to Weatherly; an' dey comin' back yere to mak trouble; but we're all ready fer 'em."

"Very well, Moses, you are trusty fellows! I suppose you haven't any fire-arms?"

"We mos' sholy is, Marster, an' we know how to use 'em, too!"

"Well, keep a sharp lookout."

Moses retired just as the old couple came out into the hall, asking permission to go into the ancestral hall to look at the portraits.

"Certainly. We will meet you there as soon as Miss Onar comes down."

Onar's step was already at the top of the stair. In a moment she entered the drawing-room. "I am now my grandmother," she said. "Stop, sir; you are not permitted to kiss my grandmother." But he did, and then they went to the hall.

The old people stood before the portrait of the woman whose dress Onar now wore. As she and St. Bertrand came in they turned to receive them, and both of them started forward, exclaiming; "Wonderful! What a marvelous likeness!"

If it was the Grandmother's portrait, it was

just as surely the portrait of Onar herself.

"Of course you have not got your great-grandmother's dress?" Asked the old lady.

"O yes, I have. Shall I put that on? Then I will be married in that, John."

"If I can content myself to remain an unmarried man for a few moments longer," murmured St. Bertrand, as he led her along to the foot of the stair with a little more haste than seemed to Onar to be necessary. She looked up at him. He answered her unspoken question by saying; "It is not long, I know, as we count moments; but duration of life must be counted by events, not by years. To your bridegroom minutes are now years, my Onar."

"I will not change again, then, John. We will go back."

She pulled him gently.

"No, dear, only I must excuse my haste, and hasten you. I will give you plenty of time afterwards. Will it take you long?"

"Only a minute," and she was half way up the stair.

"Mammy Dinah, you can help me alone. I want Rosa to get the people together in the ancestral hall. I am to be married there in a few moments. Go quickly, Rosa. Now Dinah,

make me look exactly as my great-grandmother Onar looked when she was married."

"Lor' bress Misse, I 'spected dis. I kin dress you quick, Misse."

The cause of St. Bertrand's haste was the appearance in the farther end of the hall of Pete's son. As soon as Onar had gone Moses brought him into the drawing-room to which St. Bertrand beckoned them.

"Well, young man, what have you to tell?"

"My father and I found Mr. Weatherly and his friend at the saloon, trying to get up a mob to break off the wedding. But every one was afraid. So they hired one man, a way-down nigger, to come and do mischief. We don't know what. My father sent me to warn you to be on guard. He is watching this man; and I must go back with two others to watch Mr. Weatherly and his friend."

"Well done, my boy, go quickly."

He left immediately.

"Moses, several men should be stationed in every direction from the house, to watch for the approach of any one. Weatherly would not hesitate to kill us all, I think. Are you afraid?"

"No Marster, I'se seen the cannon's mouth. Men are out watching, Marster. Dey cotch 'im."

"Why, Moses, you are a regular general!"

"I'se been fru de wa' Marster."

Before Moses could leave the room without seeming to be running away, Onar came tripping lightly down the stair.

"Are you keeping Mr. St. Bertrand company, Moses? Do I look like my great-grandmother, Onar, now? I want you to give me away to Mr. St. Bertrand in a moment more. Will you be ready?"

"Yes, Misse. Lor' bress you!" And the old man went away wiping his eyes.

Onar and St. Bertrand followed immediately; too hurriedly, it again seemed to Onar; but she attributed it to her bridegroom's love, or tried to do so. Yet, even in her unusual excitement, she knew there was some reason. Just before they entered the hall she stopped and restrained him.

"What is it, John?"

"I did not speak."

"You do not need to speak to me, you know."

While St. Bertrand was wondering how best to answer her, Onar gently continued to speak; "You are shielding me; but I would far rather share than be shielded. I suppose Weatherly is making trouble."

"Yes, dear; but your faithful people are on

their track, and have them under their eye. There is no danger, except possibly an unpleasant interruption. That accounts for my impatience. But I do not love you less."

"No, but more, John. You can trust me; but yet it is so pleasant to be shielded.—John, John, I am coming to you now! There is no one to quarrel with my lover for my last maiden kiss; but I do not care, a thousand could not rob you of it. Kiss Onar Melbourne, John, and bid her good-by for the kin she has not!"

John kissed her with a wealth of love that made his heart weep over her.

"Now take my last maiden kiss, and our lot is cast into the lap of fate 'for better for worse, forever.' "

St. Bertrand stooped to receive her kiss. She touched his brow with her lips—pale now. Then he stepped back, and holding her hands in his, said; "I shall not bid Onar Melbourne good-by, thank God; but a joyous and life-long good-morrow. Our lot is not cast in the lap of fate, my Onar; but our destiny is in the hand of God. Is it not so?"

"Yes, John. Your hope and faith are like the two wings of an angel."

They entered the ancestral hall, and passed

slowly to the very place where the beautiful women of this race had, for generations back, been married. When they were in place, Dinah exclaimed, rather wildly; "Law, Mose! It's jest as I say; dis am my berry Misse Onar!"

"Metempsychosis!" whispered Onar.

"Planempsychosis!" answered St. Bertrand.

The clergyman now came forward and began the ceremony. He proceeded; "Onar Melbourne, do you take this man to be your lawful—"

There was the sharp report of a rifle, the sound of breaking glass behind them, and before them a flutter, and something fell.

Onar's hands clasped upon John's arm. She looked calmly up into his face and said; "The curse, John; it is an omen that—"

John placed a finger upon her lips, and took up her sentence; "—that God jogged the Devil's elbow at the critical moment, destroyed his aim to save us, and sent the bullet through that representative raven which has too long cast its shadow over Onar and her daughters. Your curse and your raven are fallen, my Onar! Let them be buried!"

The smile that illumined Onar's face as she looked up at him was a confession, and a pledge of better faith. "The angel wings again," she said.

"Misse Onar, please call Hu fru dat winder. We can't git him off. He'll kill de man!"

St. Bertrand threw open the window, and Onar stepped quickly to it.

Huraldo had been told in the morning that his mistress was coming home that day; and it had been a long day of waiting. When she came he was full of his unspeakable joy. But he had been restless. He and St. Bertrand were good friends, so that St. Bertrand was not the cause of his uneasiness. He had been conscious, since Onar's arrival, of a foreign presence among them. When young Pete started off with the hound in leash, he put himself on guard over the house and grounds. He watched the coming and going of the men, going around and around the house in widening and narrowing circles. At last, just at dusk, the vigilance and the instinct of the dog combined to discover what had escaped the vigilance of the men. One of the several men who were quietly stepping in and out of the secluded and shadowy parts of the lawn, and among the barns and out-houses, though dressed in the clothes of one of Pete's sons, was a stranger. When Huraldo discovered this, his first instinct was to set upon him; but he restrained himself

with a low growl which the stranger did not hear. From that moment the stranger was shadowed; and so skillfully that he thought the danger from the dog was passed. The man began to look more freely for the means to accomplish his fiendish work. He discovered what was going on within the hall, and took up his position near a window through which he could see St. Bertrand, and, in direct range, the portrait of great-grandmother, Onar, beyond. He deferred action, however, until he saw the clergyman actually at his task. Then he slowly raised his weapon. He was so engaged in getting his position that he did not notice a shadow creeping slowly nearer and nearer, keeping well out of sight under cover of the shrubbery, but steadily and stealthily closing in upon him. When the weapon was finally raised, Huraldo was at the man's heel. He seized him and pulled him back. The gun discharged, but the bullet was thrown too high. In an instant Huraldo's awful jaws closed upon the man. The negroes rushed to the spot and sought by every device to get him to let go; but he intended to kill. Suddenly a sweet, low, thrilling whistle penetrated the twilight. Huraldo relaxed his hold instantly; but turned back and whined until he saw that the men had taken

possession of the culprit. Then he rushed to the window.

"Good dog, Hu. Let the boys take care of the man. You watch him, and don't let him get away; but don't bite him."

The happy fellow doubled himself into all manner of shapes, and went back to watch, but not to bite.

"Sam, is that you?" asked Onar through the window.

"Yes, Misse."

"How did it happen?"

"O Misse, I'se to blame! if it had'n bin fer ole Hu you or Marster bin done dead! I saw de man all de time, and I saw him raise de gun; but I didn't see dat 't was a gun, an' I thought 't was one ob Pete's boys pointin' us to see de ceremony. Hu done pull 'im back jest as de gun go off, and he mak de gun shoot too high. Lord forgib dis fool niggas an' bress ole Hu!"

"God bless you, too, Sam. You are not to blame," said Onar. Then she whispered to St. Bertrand; "Speak a kind word to him, John; his heart is broken."

"You know, Sam, that a dog has a faculty to find out some things better than a man can; but for all that a man is better than a dog. Do not

you be grudging old Hu his instinct. You are not to blame."

As soon as it was ascertained that the man was out of danger, he was carefully guarded by two men; and the marriage ceremony was performed.

The old clergyman and his wife went to look at the broken window, leaving the newly married pair alone together.

"Well, John, I am happy in spite of all! The Evil One has foreclosed on his curse, and taken it back; Weatherly has foreclosed on Stuart, and will have it; and, in the face of my expressed hope that he would not do so just yet, Mr. St. Bertrand has foreclosed on me and taken possession. But I am glad, if you are, John."

"Your heroism shames me, darling! How can a man fail with such a brave little wife!"

"How can a man who can coin Greek words on his way to the altar, possibly fail, anyway!"

"I'll bet my last nickle you don't know what the word means! But, no, I should loose it!"

"Evidently my husband's soul is wandering farther than Dinah's. Give me the nickle, sir!"

"It will be well with you," said the old pastor, coming up at this moment. "I have been a little afraid, on account of your 'curse', my dear Mrs. Onar; but the curse has gone, if you have come

to where you must and will make an honest fight for an honest nickle."

"O Doctor! the nickle was won on a bet!"

The doctor threw up his hands in dismay, and they all laughed.

"But, seriously, Doctor, you had some good word for us, and we don't want to miss it."

"Only this: The need of your mothers was not to appreciate the spiritual life less; but to be in closer touch with this mortal life. When the first cold blast from the world struck them, they were gone without a struggle, almost preferring their spirit world to this. The curse comes upon us when we ignore the true relation between the world of day-dreams and the world of practical living. Let me presume upon my many years of intimate acquaintance with your family to say a word from my heart. I believe that the wealth which has made it possible for these remarkable women to live in a world of dreams, undisturbed by contact with the world of sin and work which taxes and developes the powers within us to meet 'this present evil world' and win our way, has been the curse which you have feared as a fate. During the past year you have been a practical woman of the world; but your spirit world has not become less real. Your curse was lifted when

you awoke to the earthward side of life upon the prospect of losing control of some of the earth's surface. There! I have preached, uninvited!"

"But not unthanked. I have thought this out, partly, alone; but you have made it clearer to me than I had yet seen it. Thank you!"

"I, too, am thankful for your words, sir. The assurance of intellectual wealth, whether rightly or wrongly held, may have the same effect in this regard as material wealth. In both cases the curse is destroyed by the awakening; but the effects of that curse are upon us now, and will abide for a time. In themselves they are a curse. But the curse of a handicap may be borne, and ultimately removed; it is external. On the other hand, the curse of a congenital malformation of mind and spirit, in which we unconsciously take pride as the perfection of proportion, is not often overcome, being ourselves, whom we cannot see 'as others see us.' To remove the inward curse requires an awakening of soul which is humiliating. But the curse of curses, self-blindness, is destroyed in the wakening, and the proud, foolish weakling becomes the humble, wise giant."

"Oh!" exclaimed Onar, "I hope the wedding supper will be as wholesome as these psychological dissertations are! Let us go out and see."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CAVE

Young Pete was returning through the fields to Stuart Mansion when he heard the report of a rifle and saw two men leave the covert of some bushes in the fence-row not many rods distant, and run along under the cover of the fence toward the northern hills. He immediately gave chase. Suddenly the men came to a stand-still. Pete also stopped running, and approached more cautiously. After a moment he discovered why the men had stopped. Beside a ledge of rocks at the hill three men were standing. Pete was reassured and quickened his pace. These three men he believed to be his sons.

For some reason that young Pete could not understand the men who ran were determined to reach the rocks at that particular place where his sons were standing. Suddenly they made a bold dash with their pistols in hand, shouting; "Get

away from there or we'll shoot you!"

The three men dropped slowly back, not seeing any particular reason for drawing the fire.

The men who had just come up leaped into cover behind a hugh boulder which stood out a little way from the ledge, but solidly connected with it above.

Young Pete and his sons held a consultation:

"Who are they, father?"

"Don't know dat, chile. Dey gib me a run!"

"Where were they?"

"Hidin' behin' de fence on de wes' side ob de big house. A gun went off, an dey run. What you all doin' yere!"

"We run Marse Frank and the other feller in here before dark, and they haint come out yet."

"Mebby dey done come out some odder way."

So saying Pete stepped boldly around behind the boulder, followed by his sons. Suddenly he stopped and said in a low voice; "Two ob you go back an' watch if dey come out anywheres."

It was quite dark in the passage into which young Pete and his son, little Pete, now entered. They listened, but did not hear any sound. Pete lit several matches, and carefully examined the rocks all around. There were crevices here and there, and fissures, large enough to admit a

man's arm; but there were none larger except the main passage which they were following. This led them out at a point only a few feet from where they went in.

"Dat's mighty quar!" exclaimed young Pete, scratching his woolly pate, as they all met. "No pusson in dere; an' dey haint no place whar dey can git out 'cept dese two places! Yo' sho dey haint come out yere, boys?"

"Sure, father! Couldn't they climb up at all!"

"No! All tight overhead. You! little Pete, go to de house an' tell ole Pete dat young Pete want some men wid guns an' lanterns. Mebby yo' better see ole Mose an' Marster St. Bertrand, too. Hi, now!"

The wedding supper had only just begun when Moses touched St. Bertrand's elbow and asked; "Could I speak wid Marster in private?"

"Moses, is it anything which the others of us ought not to hear?"

"Dese all yo' good trusty fren's, Misse; no harm for dem to hear, as I know. Little Pete jus' cum in frum his daddy an' brudders out by de cave. De boys done chase Marse Frank an' de stranger in dere, an' dey watchin' de hole to cotch 'em when dey cum out, when Pete done

chase two mo' men in dere!"

"What ought to be done, John?" asked Onar.

"You know your people better than I do; you had better direct them. I must look into the matter personally; but if they can be trusted to keep guard for a little while we will finish our supper."

"You can trust them, John, to do just what you tell them. Please give Moses his orders."

"Have the cave watched, Moses, till I come."

"Yes Marster," answered Moses, and went out.

As soon as the guests were gone, St. Bertrand hastened to the cave.

Onar immediately changed her wedding dress for a riding habit, and, in ten minutes, was on her way through the fields in the direction of the cave. She arrived just as St. Bertrand had done questioning the men.

"Why! Onar, dear, this is no place for you!"

"Now, John, you know I am a wild creature of the wilderness. Please don't cage me!"

"What is your pleasure, my dear?"

"Kindly assist me to dismount. I know every nook and cranny of these rocks. Behind that great boulder where the men are standing was my playhouse for many years."

St. Bertrand handed her down. As they came

up to the men he said; "Let young Pete come with me, and the rest of you watch here."

"May I go with you, John?" Onar's voice trembled a little. John's disapproval hurt her.

"There may be danger, dear."

"I know it; possibly death. I am not here thoughtlessly, John. If anything happens to you to-night, Oh! I must be with you!"

"I shall be very careful for your sweet sake, my darling," he murmured in her ear.

"Thank you!"

When they were directly behind the rock Onar said; "This used to be my playhouse. I once lost a doll down this wide fissure. She fell quite a long time before I heard her strike. I used to fish down there with a crooked pin, in hopes of fishing her up; but she has lain in her narrow house now for many years. I am sure that there is no opening in here through which a man could pass. They must have come out at one or the other of these entrances."

"No, Misse, dey nebber!" said young Pete, respectfully, but confidently.

"Then where did they go, Pete?"

"Fru de rocks, Misse!"

"John, there is another place a few rods from here that is strangely connected with this in

some way ; but in what way we never found out."

"Can you show the way to it?"

"Yes. Young Pete knows the place. The little cave, Pete. You go ahead."

As they came again from behind the rock St. Bertrand said ; "Let little Pete come with us. The rest of you watch here." Then to the father and son he said ; "Go very carefully, and watch for footprints."

They clambered over the rocks and soon came to a decided break, down which they climbed to the soil of the field which came well up to the wall of rock. Near where they climbed down there was an opening into a cave of the dimensions of a large room.

"Stop!" cried St. Bertrand, "here are tracks!"

There were four distinct footprints, all leading outward. In comparing them it became evident that the four tracks had been made by two men only, who must have recently come, twice, out of this cave. But how did they get in there?

"Is there another entrance to this cave?"

"No," replied Onar, "except from the bowels of the earth, at the farther side. There is a hole there large enough to admit a man. I do not know that any one ever went in there."

"Let us go in and investigate this opening."

They entered and crossed the cave. A word of surprise from Pete attracted their attention.

"Dat 'ar rock nebber us'ter be dar, Misse!"

"That is true, Pete. You can see the hole, John; but the passage is stopped by that rock on the inside. When Frank Weatherly and I played together here, in the old days of our innocent childhood, we used to call back and forth from this hole and the crevice down which I lost my doll. The voice from this hole seems to be just down the crevice. A whisper could almost be heard. I suppose there is a large cave in there."

St. Bertrand and young Pete put their united strength against the rock; but it did not move a particle. Then they all went out.

"Now, Pete, let your dog follow these tracks. Keep your lanterns dark. We will follow you at one side, so as not to destroy the scent; we may wish to retrace the trail."

They had not gone far when the dog became distressed because he could not go two ways at one time.

"How is this, Pete?"

"Men sholy parted yere, Marster."

"I suppose so. We must follow first one and then the other."

"Not necessarily," said Onar. "Two men

came out, twice, according to your theory of the tracks, John. They both came together, both times, over the very same path to this point. One time they went this way, and the other time they went that way."

"That is quite possible. Indeed, come to think of it, that is probable. Here is a farther working hypothesis: The boys did not see four men enter behind the big rock, but they saw two men enter twice."

"I had thought of that, and it suggested what I said a moment ago. But this hypothesis evidently supposes the possibility of passing through from one of these places to the other, which they evidently did—"

"—evidently did," finished St. Bertrand.

By this time the dog had led them almost to the house. They continued to follow the north and south fence which passed the house on the west side, and soon came opposite to it. Here the track came to an end.

"I seed my two men come out ob dis yere clump ob bushes," said Pete. "Hi! What yer doin' in dar, Sam?"

Sam pulled himself out of the clump of bushes, saying; "We's on de watch, Pete."

"That's right, Sam," said St. Bertrand.

"Now we track 'em back," said young Pete.

The dog again put his nose to the ground, and before long came to a double track which indicated another fork in the path. They now left the track upon which they had just come down, and went across the field upon the track of the two men whom Pete had chased behind the rock. This was proof conclusive that Pete's men who had gone in here had come out at the little cave.

As they came up Zephyr neighed and Huraldo barked their welcome.

"I declare, Mrs. St. Bertrand, your animals are where you left them!"

"Yes sir; and they could be found here any time until morning, if I did not call for them," answered Onar, as she stepped aside to caress them.

"Now are you intending to follow the other track?" she asked.

"Yes. Had not you better ride now?"

"Perhaps so. I am a little tired."

St. Bertrand assisted her to mount and then walked beside her as they went across to the point where the outcoming tracks had forked. They now followed the other track, which led through the fields in a southeasterly direction

to the road at some distance from the house. There the scent was lost at a point where were decided evidences that two horses had been left standing. A careful investigation showed that the horses had taken the direction toward Weatherly.

"Here is evidence sufficient to warrant the immediate arrest of Frank Weatherly and his companion," said St. Bertrand, "but we will not proceed against him just yet; there are other things which I want to learn first. Come to the house, young Pete, and we will arrange relays to watch at the rocks and around the house, for to-night, at least."

The arrangements were soon made, and Stuart Mansion was once again dark and quiet, rising before the eyes of the dusky watchers in stately silhouette against the horizon.

About ten o'clock on the following day St. Bertrand rode over to Weatherly, for the purpose of leasing Stuart, if possible. Having arrived, he was admitted and seated in the senior Mr. Weatherly's private library. The old gentleman, decidedly more gray than a year ago, and looking worn and troubled, met St. Bertrand with stately dignity, saying; "I suppose from the card which I have received that you are John St. Bertrand.

I am Mr. Weatherly. Please be seated, sir."

"Thank you; my business has to do with your son. I have married Onar Melbourne, and we wish to lease Stuart for a period of years. I hope your son is at home."

"I greatly wish that you might have succeeded in your effort, sir; but Frank started for Europe about an hour ago."

Before Mr. Weatherly had finished speaking, St. Bertrand had risen, looking at his watch.

"Excuse me, Mr. Weatherly, for my abrupt departure; but I think that by hard riding I can reach him before his train leaves."

"Certainly, sir. God speed you and give you success; but I fear the contrary."

A moment more and St. Bertrand was in the saddle, and The Tzar, a fleet and powerful young son of Zephyr, with his long neck stretched out and his nose to the road, was on the track of the fugitive; nor did his quivering muscles once yield, or his tremendous stride once falter until, two minutes before leaving time, St. Bertrand sprang from the saddle at the station from which Weatherly would start. Throwing the reins to a policeman, he rushed to the train.

The conductor stood, watch in hand, to give the signal for starting. St. Bertrand approached

him and said; "Conductor, there is a man aboard your train who must come off."

"Have you the papers to take him off?"

"No! He is fleeing from an attempted crime. I wish to get him off peaceably. I must have the police at hand before I go in, so that if he refuses I can take him off by force."

"Be quick, sir. It is starting time."

St. Bertrand soon found Weatherly, on the opposite side of the car from the station, nervously consulting his watch. He started visibly as St Bertrand touched his shoulder.

"Mr. Weatherly," he spoke very calmly, "I want to lease Stuart from you, and I have gotten the conductor to wait while I ask you to stop over one train or so to consider the matter. I hope you will not refuse me."

"My ticket is bought! Kronkite will attend to those matters," he answered, with an attempt at dignity and unconcern.

"Nevertheless, I prefer to deal with you, sir; and it is for your interest as well as mine to come at once, and take your trip later."

There was authority in the tone.

"Will you promise not to detain me more than one train?"

"Yes, if we can make satisfactory arrange-

ments in that time. We will hasten matters."

"Well, I will stop over."

His baggage had already been removed from the baggage car, and the train was in motion as St. Bertrand stepped after him to the platform.

"Well, Mr. St. Bertrand, this is rather an imperative way of doing business! I am a fool to have stopped over! What do I want to lease Stuart to you for?—of all men!"

"For the reason that Stuart is now well managed, and will no doubt be more profitable to you under my care than it would be in the hands of a stranger; and for the reason that a man who forecloses a mortgage and takes away the home that has belonged to another, however just his claim may be, must always suffer for it in the eyes of the community; especially so in this case. It might be better to leave the country! But, if you lease Stuart to me, many will never know of the foreclosure."

"What do I care for the good opinion of the rabble?"

"More than you choose to admit. By the way, do you know that this sudden start of your's for Europe was very untimely?"

Weatherly was startled, but replied carelessly; "No! Why? What do you mean?"

"I suppose you have heard that a negro fired a shot into Stuart Mansion while the marriage ceremony was being performed."

"No! Marriage ceremony! Who is married?"

"Onar Melbourne and myself."

"Ah! And some one shot at you?"

"Yes."

"So you and Onar are married! I supposed from what you said about leasing Stuart, and keeping her from leaving, that you intended to marry her. But what had this to do with my departure for Europe, pray?"

"Nothing, perhaps. You know more about that than I do. If everything goes on quietly and satisfactorily at Stuart, in case we lease the place, we shall simply incarcerate the negro who fired the shot and let the matter rest; but, if we are forced to leave Stuart, we shall run the criminal to bay. Our evidence is ready."

"Hm! I don't quite see the connection; but I feel inclined to let you have the place. For how long do you want it?"

"Ten years."

"Ten years! Very well, I'll do it! We will go to the office of Kronkite, my attorney, and make out the papers."

"Excuse me; as I am an attorney I will make

out the papers, and we will not see Kronkite."

"O, I can't do anything without him!"

"Very well, sir, then we will not make out the papers; I will not have a thing to do with him."

Weatherly was frightened. "O well, it does not make any particular difference. Arrange it to suit yourself."

Which he did, and reached home for supper.

CHAPTER XIV

DEBT DAMNED

An heir has come to St. Bertrand's debts.

Onar is the happy mother of a boy; that is, in so far as she is happy. She is happy in her boy and in her husband's love; but the farming has not paid so well of late. She has now been four years married, and Mark is three years old.

During the first year of her married life Onar was cheered by the presence of Belle Burns, one of her Vassar friends. A few weeks after her boy was born Mark Burndale called, met the baby and named him Mark. He met Belle Burns at the same time, and seemed, after several months of correspondence and several visits to her home, to be fully determined to name her Mark, too.

But lately no guests had been invited to visit at Stuart. The house was getting shabby. Not a dollar had been allowed for repairs, although a liberal provision had been made for them in the

contract. The surplus that had usually filled the granaries was gone each year to pay rent. The wolf that had howled at the window-pane, in the storm of sleet, a few years before, gnawed now at everything in the house.

It is September, the day before the fifth anniversary of Onar's marriage. It is mid-afternoon; John will be coming soon from his office in the city. Little Mark is happy about the house. Onar has thus far kept him well clad. Her own clothing is scrupulously neat; but—O the pathos of a woman's turned and re-turned, then again turned clothes!

"Poor John!" she sighs, "His heart is broken. This is his last day at the office. He has given up, and perhaps he might as well."

There is a rap at the door of the room where Onar is sitting—a timid rap.

She draws back her feet, to hide her shoes, and says, "Come in!"

"Ole Mose" and Dinah came in, hand in hand, like two children. They knelt down before her, and Dinah buried her face in Onar's lap and burst into sobbing. The tears ran down the black face of "Ole Mose" like rain from the roof in a summer shower. But he controlled his voice, and spread out his hands before Onar to add to his

entreaty: "Dear Misse, Ole Dinah an' me lub you mo' dan we kin tell; an' we can't bar to see you suffer so patient an' sad. It'll kill us!"

He stifled a sob, and continued: "Ole Dinah an' me hab some money in de bank. We aint dare offer it befor'. It seem so sassy. But, O Misse, won't you please tak it, an' mak us so happy? Den de boys all hab money in de bank. You al'us paid us, if all de rest went widout. We got money plenty to pay Mas'r Frank, an' to git stuff fo' de stock, an' fo' us all dis year, an' twel de crops grow agin. An' you know how well dat stuff you put on de fiel' done do. We got money 'nough to put dat on all de lan' nex' year, an' den we do better. Please Misse, tak it! De people dey all waitin' down to Pete's cabin. We'se 'fraid to come, but dey done drive us off!"

"Please' Misse Onar," sobbed Old Dinah, "Let Ole Dinah buy you—some shoes—fo' dese dear—little—feet!"

It is no use, Onar, fair dreamer, dear dreamer, give in—give in! This is a part of the little curse that follows the curse—this the awakening that follows the dream—give in!"

The fair head bows slowly, and slowly the long pent up sorrow breaks forth over these two bowed heads whose black faces shine in their tears under

the white crown of the snows of many winters. The wounded bird from her mountain flight has fallen, fluttering, into the dust of the plain.

Moses and Dinah were awed into silence.

Baby Mark climbed up into his mother's lap and, rubbing her wet face with his little hands, kept saying; "What for my pretty mama cry? Don't cry, mama Onar. Mark will take care of you!"

In a few moments Onar controlled herself and answered the old people, who were afraid to stay and yet were afraid to go: "There! Moses and Dinah, your kindness has overpowered me; but I am all right now. You have made your offer in love, and I cannot refuse you. Moses, we have time to reach the office before your master leaves. Saddle Zephyr. You and Dinah can take a horse and carriage and drive to the city with Mark. We will talk to your master, and Dinah can buy me some shoes. Come here, my old mammy and daddy, and let me kiss you both!"

While they were on their way to the city, another scene was being enacted in the office of St. Bertrand. Weatherly had come to ask that the rent be paid promptly on the day after to-morrow. St. Bertrand had said that he could not pay it all. Weatherly had grown sarcastic and hard.

The years had passed and no farther word had been said regarding the cave, which, meantime, no one had ever entered. Some pair of the eyes that never slept in Onar's service had been upon both entrances to that cave every moment since the night of her marriage. And these watchers had been as faithfully watched.

During these fleeting years St. Bertrand had been ruined by his creditors—that is to say, he had sown his seed, and his harvest had come. Under these circumstances Weatherly had been regaining his confidence and audacity.

"Well, St. Bertrand, I must have my money. Can't you sell something?"

"We have already sold ourselves too short in order to get what we now have for you."

"Well, there is something else that you have which I will pay you well for. What will you take for your wife?"

St. Bertrand's heart gave a leap, and he almost sprang at the villain's throat. But he checked himself. His time had not yet come. Would it ever come! He would keep steady with this man one year more, and try a different move. Forcing a smile, he answered; "About a million dollars, I think, sir."

"Done!" said Weatherly, instantly. "I'll pay

it and take her off your hands, very gladly!"

"Be gone, you villain!" cried St. Bertrand, advancing upon him, "and never mention my wife's name again in my presence upon pain of punishment!"

Weatherly hastily left the office and, grinning the grin of a devil, went his way. He had been gone only a few moments when Onar entered with little Mark. She had never before seen St. Bertrand so aroused, and the half frantic look in his eyes frightened her.

"What is it, dear John?"

He did not answer. She was a wise woman, and her instinct was as true as her love. She did not press the question, but said pleasantly; "I think I have good news. It depends somewhat upon how you think of it."

"It is time," he said simply, and sat down at his desk with his head in his hands.

He had not spoken to his little boy; and this so unusual conduct had broken the little fellow's heart. He was fighting manfully for the mastery of himself, but must soon have been overcome. Onar, who had received neither welcome nor kiss, knew the state of the little fellow's heart, and rescued him from his unequal battle, and saved the suffering nerves of her husband by saying;

"See here, Mark, there is a man with an organ on the street, you can see him nicely from here."

After waiting in silence for a moment Onar went softly to the suffering man and caressed the raven hair that she loved so well. In a moment her hand was detained and pressed to his lips.

"This has been an awful day, my wife! When you came I was greatly agitated; let me mend my welcome to my dear ones."

Presently he asked; "What is the news you bring, dear?"

"John, our servants offer us their money, offer it literally on their knees, with tears and sobs. You will revolt from taking it, John; but to fail to do so would wound as loving hearts as ever beat for us." Then she described the interview with Moses and Dinah.

"God bless them!" he exclaimed; and added, after a moment's thought, "You are right, we must not refuse them; but let me consider until to-morrow how to arrange some security."

"Very well, John; but Weatherly can have his rent to-morrow. I am so glad for you, John!"

Just as they were going out, the afternoon mail was brought. Mark held out his hand for his papa's letter, which the postman handed to him with a smile, and watched him as he carried it

in. St. Bertrand took the letter and kissed Mark, and sent him on with Moses and Dinah. Then he opened and read it. In his desperation, he handed it to Onar. It was the first of these letters that she had ever seen.

"That good man mortgaged his farm to get money for me. Now he has lost his farm." Then, after a pause, he added; "And my boy brought in the letter. O God help me to clear myself before my son is old enough to understand that his father is debt damned!"

"O John, do not say so! Surely it has not yet come to that! Despair will never help you to redeem yourself. In this wide and beautiful world there is certainly some place and some way for a man of your ability and education to earn money enough to support himself and his family, and to pay a few hundred dollars of debts!"

"Ah yes, my good angel, that would easily be so, if I were out from under the curse for a year. But I scarcely get started to do anything before they come at me, pell-mell, in a crowd, and I am down."

"Why don't you write to these people and tell them so; and get them to wait for three or four years, to give you a chance?"

"I have tried that, dear. I wrote to them

all, and begged for three years respite. Some of my heaviest creditors responded cheerfully; but the majority of those to whom I owe but a little refused. They dog me to despair and to the grave for the few dollars that they make it impossible for me to pay!"

"Well, John, there is some way, and you will find it in due time. Do not get discouraged, dear!"

"Well, well! Let us get out of this close room! I am stifling for air—for freedom! Here comes Pete for the office furniture. Come on. He can lock the door and deliver the key."

The next day was a bright one, and the repose of the night had helped to revive hope in the heart of St. Bertrand.

"Indeed, Onar, it amounts to their lending the money to me; but for your sake and, indeed, for theirs, I will take it, and we will try once more."

Hereupon Moses was summoned. When they came to count up the money that could be commanded, there were still lacking a few dollars of enough to satisfy Weatherly's claim. But Onar's new shoes were good ones, and large enough.

Soon after dinner Weatherly called. St. Bertrand offered him what money they had; and

said that if the crops were better another year they would be able to pay him what was now lacking; perhaps they could do so sooner.

Weatherly refused to take anything less than the full amount, and left the place.

St. Bertrand prepared to go to the city, in order, if possible, to secure the few dollars that they lacked of having enough to pay the rent.

"Do not expect me back until late, Onar."

"O John, do not look at me so sadly! What of it! Sometimes I almost fear that we have not escaped my curse, after all; that it has only been put off, and that it is now about to fall! Never mind the rent, John, or anything else! We have each other, we three, now," gathering her boy into her lap, and clinging to the neck of her husband. "We can leave all and go away off, and there begin anew."

"It would be useless, dear. Before expenses of flight were paid the hounds would be after us, and we should be obliged to fly again, spreading our name and fame wherever we went. No, we had better stay here and live and die where we are known."

"Well then, John, God knows the integrity of our hearts."

"That is real comfort, my good angel, and I

believe he will yet open a way of escape. Let it come at whatever sacrifice, only so that I can clear myself and my dear ones from my shame."

"John, you are not in despair?"

"No, darling. Ah! you are afraid of some rash act! Do not be afraid of that, dear. I am not such a coward as to leave you and my boy."

"You must forgive me, dear, knowing all that has happened to noble men and women in this house."

"Onar, my darling, you can never know how my heart aches for you! Why did I ever meet you, only to bring my burdens into your life, already burdened!"

"My only regret, John, is that possibly you would have got on faster without your wife and boy to support. I have no way in which to pull! I can only ride!" Her lip quivered painfully. John drew her head down upon his shoulder, and said; "Onar, I think I never told you that when I first saw you I was praying God to send to me his angel to deliver me. I believed when I saw you that God had answered my prayer, and I believe it more firmly to-day than ever. I never prayed God to deliver me by sending me money; but what I needed more than money, some one to take a more absorbing hold upon me than my

debts could take. God sent his angel. More than once she has saved me from—I know not what! It is hard on my angel! I was selfish to ask God to send her—how selfish I am only just beginning to realize.”

“John, I am happier passing through the fire with you than I ever was in my life alone. Can you forget the mournful tone of that ‘sole’ stop? O—my John!”

Words were useless now. They sat quietly for a few moments receiving from each other that strength which made each strong to give to the other. Then John said; “I must leave you now for a few hours; but unless something unforeseen occurs I shall be with you before nightfall.”

An ominous cloud hung over them at parting. They both felt it. Before they met again it broke away, and their lives began to clear.

When St. Bertrand arrived at the city in search of the few dollars which were yet lacking of the amount necessary to pay the rent, he went first to a pawn-broker’s shop. Here he presented his very fine jewelled watch, a gift from the grateful widow whose property he had been instrumental in saving; and a diamond stud of great value, an heirloom from his grandfather. The broker was suspicious, and St. Bertrand was humiliated.

CHAPTER XV

REDEEMED

Every effort to secure the money failed, and at last St. Bertrand went to the post-office on his way home. There he found a letter from the publishers who had a story which he had finished and sent to them several months before. Opening it nervously, expecting to find that the story had been lost or stolen, he found a draft for one thousand dollars; and the promise of a royalty.

Early on the following morning St. Bertrand called young Pete, and said; "I want you to hide four men very carefully in the little cave, and then call in all of our watchers. Call them in boldly so that Weatherly's men will see that the watch is off. Little Pete, you come with me."

St. Bertrand and little Pete then started for Weatherly. Before they came within sight of the house, Pete had disappeared.

At the door St. Bertrand requested an inter-

view with both of the Weatherlys at once. After a rather stern interview Frank Weatherly finally consented to allow St. Bertrand to retain five hundred dollars for repairs, and gave a receipt for the balance of the rent money.

St Bertrand put the receipt in his pocket and said; "This settlement does not imply that our affairs are to be allowed to run on indefinitely as they have been going for the past few years. I never strike a man when he is not on guard; so I wish to say that a struggle is now on to the righting of many wrongs, and to the punishment of the wrong doers, unless they repent and make restitution. But I do not seek revenge. Vengeance belongs to God; he will punish. But, Frank Weatherly, your mother would tell you, if she were here; and now your father will assure you, that God will forgive, if you truly repent."

Then, turning to the father, he said; "I would spare you pain, sir, if I could. Onar wished me to give you her true love. Good day!"

"God bless her, and you also! Good day!"
The stately old man's lip quivered in spite of his courageous heart.

Frank Weatherly did not move as St. Bertrand passed out. The reference to his mother, whom he had loved with all the ardor of his boyhood,

had touched the most vibrant string of his better nature. He bowed his head upon the table at last. Then the father spoke; and finally Frank responded.

The conversation was long and wracking. At last the noble master of the old place sank into a chair, suffering from a most serious attack of a life-long malady. Frank got him onto a divan, and after a few moments he was somewhat relieved; but the attack was very severe and the result was very uncertain.

"My son, my hours are few, I think. It is well; but I would like to see these things made right before I go. You know that you hold my estate wrongfully. I would like to have it made right. It can then be made yours in an honorable way."

"I will make it right, father. Then do with your property as you think best. The papers that you lost are in a secret place some distance from here, together with those that belong to Onar Melbourne. I will get them to-morrow and all shall be made right."

"I doubt if I see another day dawn, my son. Could you get them to-night?"

"I will go for them at once, father."

Weatherly tied his horse at the point nearest

to the cave and crossed the field on foot. Little Pete rode into the barn at Stuart where his father was watching the cave from a north door in the hay-loft.

"Hi! father, look out!"

"Dat you, little Pete? A man jis' went in behin' de big rock. It was Mas'r Frank, or Pete los' his eyes! You jis' swing dat lantern, once, back an' forf—dar! Now if de niggers dat hid in de cave haint done got sleepy dey koch 'im!"

The men watched eagerly for a few moments; then little Pete said; "I'm going over there, father; they may not have seen the signal."

"You stay whar yer is, chile. Aint you lay dose fella's ob Mas'r Frank's got jis' as good eyes as you hab?"

Little Pete fell back upon the hay and waited.

Weatherly went into the cave from behind the big rock, secured the desired papers, and went to the hole that led out into the little cave. He raised a hugh iron latch and threw his weight onto the smaller ballast. The great rock slowly moved to one side. He pressed himself into the hole, and was seized by a powerful man upon each side, and a strong hand was clasped over his mouth.

As his weight was removed from the smaller

ballast, the rock rolled back to its place and the great latch fell to its catch inside. The men then bound his hands behind his back and gagged him.

In the meantime little Pete went to the house and aroused St. Bertrand who hastened to the cave.

In the cave, the men knowing that they would be attacked if they went out with Weatherly a prisoner had come to the decision to search him and to take every paper that he had, as well as all other suspicious articles, and let him go. This they had done, and Weatherly stepped forth just in time to meet St. Bertrand.

"Just stand where you are, Mr. Weatherly," said St. Bertrand firmly. "I am wondering how you got by my men in the cave."

Sam now appeared and explained, showing St. Bertrand the papers that had been taken from Weatherly.

"Have you anything to say Mr. Weatherly?"

"Father thinks he is dying. He wanted me to make some things right with him, and I came here for the papers required. Your wife's papers are among them. The boys have them all. Mr. St. Bertrand, you have me fast; but I should have handed the papers to you this morning anyway."

"I believe you, Mr. Weatherly."

St. Bertrand turned to the men, who had come to the exit from the cave, and said; "Give me all that you took from Mr. Weatherly, boys. You did your work well, and now the watch is off; you may go to the house; there is no danger now."

He took the papers and gave them all back.

"Thank you!" said Weatherly. "These are the papers that belong to your wife. Please look over all of these papers and be sure that I give you all that are yours."

"I will look them over; but I believe that you are perfectly sincere in this. These are all that belong to my wife. Hasten back to your father, I will call to see him in the morning."

Suddenly Weatherly turned toward the hills and threw up both arms. This was a signal to his men to disperse.

St. Bertrand went to bed and slept soundly until nine o'clock when he gently awoke and, opening his eyes before he had made any movement, he saw Onar sitting by his bedside quietly reading the long lost papers. He kept perfectly still and watched her. It was a rare luxury to see this exquisitely beautiful woman as she sat quietly reading the legal papers through. The rapture that some women feel at the acquisition

of wealth, was entirely absent from her face.

She laid the papers upon the table and, raising her eyes, looked out toward the morning sky—away out, away up! And the old fires are lighted again; but henceforth to burn as a light to her path, not to consume her life as a bon-fire.

Softly these low-spoken words come from the pillow; "What does my darling see?"

She did not move or lower her gaze; but the soft color stole into her cheek, as it was wont to do at the sound of John's love tones.

"I see God, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, holding the sceptre of everlasting power, guiding the affairs of men."

Then, seating herself upon the edge of the bed, she asked sadly; "But, dear John, what of poor Frank Weatherly? must his soul be lost? And what of Kronkite? It is so sad to think that some will go down to the death!"

"Well, dear, you can rest your heart with reference to Frank. I think he is rescued. Kronkite I have not yet seen. Oh—have you had breakfast?"

"You profane man! No, I waited for you! I will have it ready in five minutes, sir!" And she tripped roguishly out of the room.

St. Bertrand found old Mr. Weatherly very feeble, but he welcomed him with warm cordiality; and asked his aid in getting the crooked ways straightened out.

Weatherly revealed to St. Bertrand the secret of the cave, and asked him to consider as his own all that he found there. As soon as St. Bertrand returned home from his call upon Mr. Weatherly, accompanied by Onar, he visited the cave. Passing behind the boulder, he located a certain fissure in the wall of rock. He reached in the whole length of his arm and, after feeling about for a long time, his finger touched a button. This he pressed according to a key which he held in his other hand. The combination was set to the word "Onar." Instantly upon the last touch the wall of rock opened before them. They entered. And, lighting their torches the cave was dimly illumined.

In one end was a natural grotto, resembling an old fire-place, over which was the old fashioned mantle. Upon this mantle, in the midst of many trophies of childhood, upon a little golden chair, sat Onar's long lost doll.

"Poor, wicked Frank," said Onar, as she stood looking at it with St. Bertrand's arm around her, "I wonder if he really did love me."

Immediately after dinner, St. Bertrand went to the city and caused the arrest of Kronkite upon several criminal charges. He was not allowed to give bail, and went to jail to await trial. A few days sufficed to get matters straightened out and to procure Kronkite's condemnation for a term of years. Frank Weatherly was as deeply involved as he; but his repentance was genuine, and as St. Bertrand did not make any move against him no one else felt himself called upon to do so, and he was allowed to go free, and afterward became prominent in New York City in the work of prison reform. But Kronkite was in a rage. No kindness could touch him. No favor aroused the least sign of repentance. He went blaspheming and foaming to prison.

"Onar, you can be spared now, and you can yet have two or three weeks of delightful weather at your castle. It is only the first of October. I have some other matters which must be arranged, and then I will join you. Do you want to go?"

"I had been thinking about it, John. I am exceedingly tired and heart sick from sight of so much crime and selfishness. Can I be spared?"

"Yes, dear. I will manage somehow to live without you for a week."

"My personal affairs are all straightened out, I think, except one. That I want attended to before I go. I offered the firm of Germain and St. Bertrand ten per cent of all the property they could save for me. Has that firm dissolved?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then, the ten per cent goes rightfully to you who have finally done the work; and you can pay Germain such fees as you and he can agree upon for the work that he did. I have carefully estimated the amount due you to be Seventy eight Thousand, Five hundred Dollars.

Not a word, sir, except in a business way. Love is love, and business is business."

Onar had so set her heart upon paying this commission to him that John accepted it, perhaps as much for her sake as for his own.

In a few hours, Onar and Mark, accompanied by their retinue, started for Onar Castle. St. Bertrand saw them off and spent the day in the city. He returned home before nightfall, caused a fire to be built in the old fireplace in Onar's ancestral hall, sat down before it and fell into a deep revery, the oft recurring refrain of which was, "I am a free man! I'm out of debt!"

In a few days St. Bertrand started for Onar Castle. He stopped at Castleton to see Germain

and to pay him a liberal fee. As he entered the office a cheery voice cried; "Hello, my saint! No, I have not any letters for you!"

"Hush! old man. Don't open the grave of the Devil!"

"Ah, my boy, he was a devil who fought you fiercely before he was conquered. But, let him rot! he is vanquished! How are you, old fellow? You look as if you could run a race or turn a hand-spring as of yore. I declare! I believe our fair dreamer has been lending you some of her graces while at the same time maturing her own! I saw her yesterday."

"Did you? She is well? Where did you see her?"

"I did. She is well. I saw her at Onar Castle. Ah! now, don't you imagine that you can monopolize such a woman, my boy! She belongs to us all, as do the hills and the skys and the sunsets! I mean it, John! No one can enter the world that is sacred to you and her alone; but you must expect that whenever she comes within reach of us heavy-footed mortals we shall have a glimpse of her."

"You are welcome, old man. I fear that I have not fully appreciated her powers before, since I find that she has made a poet of you."

"Of course not; and you never can, even you!"

"Come, come! I have some business with you, and then I must be off."

"Ah, no more charm for you in the company of your old pard, I see, after all that I did in bringing you up! 'Tis a shame! Well, now."

"Onar wished me to settle with you for the legal business which you did for her."

The business was soon pleasantly settled.

"I must be off. Can't you run up again before we leave?"

"Perhaps so. Fact is, I supposed you were there, or I should not have gone quite so soon to see your beautiful dreamer. I am not afraid to call when you're at home, I'd have you know!"

"Prove it!" said St. Bertrand, laughing, as he hurried away to his train.

The morning after Onar reached "The Haunt of the Spirits" dawned beautiful and clear; she was up before sunrise, and off on the lake. About breakfast time she came slowly into the cove. Her beautiful boat floated gently onto the sandy beach, and stopped. The memories of the past are in the eyes of the fair woman who sits in the richly upholstered seat in the stern of the boat and leans her head upon the head-rest, as when

first we saw her here. The early sunlight has crowned her head with a beautiful and delicately wrought covering of gold. The face is almost in repose; but there is the shadow of a smile playing about the perfect mouth, and the dream light in the eyes that reflect the glory of the morning sky is heightened by the light of memory.

She arose at last, and had just stepped upon the beach when a happy voice called; "Hello there, my fairy sister! I don't dare come out, for I am after a duck, and I have caught my one dove, you know."

Their merry laugh rang out over the lake.

"There! you have frightened my duck, and my dove will starve!" cried Mark Burndale, as the duck took to wing.

"What a ferocious dove you must have! Has she claws and a beak, like a crow?" laughed Onar. "She can't be the Belle Burns that I knew."

Mark now came out. "You will always be getting the better of a fellow. This is a pleasant surprise. When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday. I did not expect to see you here."

"Belle and I have just completed our cottage; we are staying a few days to enjoy it. It will be jolly, now that you are here. Did St. Bertrand come with you, and my little name-sake?"

"He is coming in a day or two, and Mark is here. Where is your cottage, Mark? Oh! Tell Belle to come over right away!"

Down the slope from the castle came a rush of feet; but Huraldo did not think it necessary to put on any dignity because of the presence of Burndale. His joy was unspeakable, nor could he express it by his acting, although he tried his best to do so, both by vocal utterances of all sorts and by frantic gyrations. Then, suddenly remembering his little charge, he ran to the castle and came gently back with four-year-old little Mark, one of whose chubby hands was buried deeply in the wool on his shoulder. The beautiful child called gleefully to his mother, and she answered him with her mellow "Hoo, hoo!" As they met, Huraldo tried anxiously to perform an important ceremony. He took Burndale's hand in his mouth and pulled him toward his little master; then he took his little master's hand and drew him gently toward Burndale. "Wooh!" said he. They were so dumb! He finally held up his paw and made the motion to shake.

Burndale threw back his head and laughed as it dawned upon him that he was being introduced to little Mark. He shook cordially, and Hu was in frantic ecstasy again. Around and around

he ran, with his tail hanging down, and his glad "woo, wooh!" Little Mark cried, "Sick 'em!" and Onar and Burndale laughed until they were hungry for breakfast.

St. Bertrand rode The Tzar to the station at Castleton and put him in the baggage car.

Arrived at Brookings he was soon in the saddle and eager to see his wife and boy. Light of foot and fleet as a deer, the noble horse soon bore him through the forest and to the regions near Onar Castle. Suddenly the horse checked his pace and came to a stand so unexpectedly as nearly to throw his rider over his head.

St. Bertrand looked up to discover what had so suddenly transfixed his horse, and his heart gave a tremendous leap. He and his horse were instantly in harmonious attitude. A woman of surpassing beauty of face and form, followed by a Great St. Bernard dog, came slowly riding a snow-white mare into the range of his vision.

The afternoon sun of a glorious October day was throwing about this musing woman and her attendant creatures a glimmering radiance which was almost spiritual. A few days of this perfect rest of soul and body had made Onar again as fair of face and form as ever she was. Yes, fairer.

The charm of her spirit, in some element or shading which cannot be defined, is more grandly and sweetly powerful than it was when Mark Burndale fell before her—than when St. Bertrand claimed her. The difference is not superficial; but all the wealth of her spirit life is aglow with it. She is not a dreamer, only, even for the hour; for there is a presence as well as an absence of spirit. She is dreaming, not the dreams of fancy alone, but of a hero who will soon be here and of deeds that will yet be done. Her face is illumined, not only with the far-off fires of the muses, but also with the nearer fires of a love that lays hold of life with a steady grasp.

Zephyr stops suddenly, and Huraldo growls. She raises her eyes, and the rich blood bounds to her face and neck. We leave her in the arms of St. Bertrand.





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